



THE THREE TRAVELERS HAD REACHED IN SILENCE THE DENSEST SHADDS OF THE
FOREST, [Page 43]

UNDINE
AND
OTHER TALES.

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NEW YORK :
A. L. BURT, PUBLISHER.

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UNDINE

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE KNIGHT CAME TO THE FISHERMAN.

THERE was once, it may be now many hundred years ago, a good old fisherman, who was sitting one fine evening before his door, mending his nets. The part of the country in which he lived was extremely pretty. The greensward, on which his cottage stood, ran far into the lake, and it seemed as if it was from love for the blue clear waters that the tongue of land had stretched itself out into them, while with an equally fond embrace the lake had encircled the green pasture rich with waving grass and flowers, and the refreshing shade of trees. The one welcomed the other, and it was just this that made each so beautiful. There were indeed few human beings, or rather none at all, to be met with on this pleasant spot, except the fisherman and his family. For at the back of this little promontory there lay a very wild forest, which, both from its gloom and pathless solitude as well as from the wonderful creatures and illusions with which it was said to abound, was avoided by most people except in cases of necessity.

The pious old fisherman, however, passed through it many a time undisturbed, when he was taking the choice fish, which he had caught at his beautiful home, to a large town situated not far from the confines of the forest. The

principal reason why it was so easy for him to pass through this forest was because the tone of his thoughts was almost entirely of a religious character, and besides this, whenever he set foot upon the evil reputed shades, he was wont to sing some holy song, with a clear voice and a sincere heart.

While sitting over his nets this evening, unsuspecting of any evil, a sudden fear came upon him, at the sound of a rustling in the gloom of the forest, as of a horse and rider, the noise approaching nearer and nearer to the little promontory. All that he had dreamed, in many a stormy night, of the mysteries of the forest, now flashed at once through his mind; foremost of all, the image of a gigantic snow-white man, who kept unceasingly nodding his head in a portentous manner. Indeed, when he raised his eyes toward the wood it seemed to him as if he actually saw the nodding man approaching through the dense foliage. He soon, however, reassured himself, reflecting that nothing serious had ever befallen him even in the forest itself, and that upon this open tongue of land the evil spirit would be still less daring in the exercise of his power. At the same time he repeated aloud a text from the Bible with all his heart, and this so inspired him with courage that he almost smiled at the illusion he had allowed to possess him. The white nodding man was suddenly transformed into a brook long familiar to him, which ran foaming from the forest and discharged itself into the lake. The noise, however, which he had heard, was caused by a knight beautifully apparelled, who, emerging from the deep shadows of the wood, came riding toward the cottage. A scarlet mantle was thrown over his purple gold-embroidered doublet; a red and violet plume waved from his golden-colored head-gear; and a beautiful and richly ornamented sword flashed from his shoulder-belt. The white steed that bore the knight was more slenderly formed than war-horses generally

are, and he stepped so lightly over the turf that this green and flowery carpet seemed scarcely to receive the slightest injury from his tread.

The old fisherman did not, however, feel perfectly secure in his mind, although he tried to convince himself that no evil was to be feared from so graceful an apparition; and therefore he politely took off his hat as the knight approached, and remained quietly with his nets.

Presently the stranger drew up, and inquired whether he and his horse could have shelter and care for the night. "As regards your horse, good sir," replied the fisherman, "I can assign him no better stable than this shady pasture, and no better provender than the grass growing on it. Yourself, however, I will gladly welcome to my small cottage, and give you supper and lodging as good as we have." The knight was well satisfied with this; he alighted from his horse, and, with the assistance of the fisherman, he relieved it from saddle and bridle, and turned it loose upon the flowery green. Then addressing his host, he said: "Even had I found you less hospitable and kindly disposed, my worthy old fisherman, you would nevertheless scarcely have got rid of me to-day, for, as I see, a broad lake lies before us, and to ride back into that mysterious wood, with the shades of evening coming on, heaven keep me from it!"

"We will not talk too much of that," said the fisherman, and he led his guest into the cottage.

There, beside the hearth, from which a scanty fire shed a dim light through the cleanly-kept room, sat the fisherman's aged wife in a capacious chair. At the entrance of the noble guest she rose to give him a kindly welcome, but resumed her seat of honor without offering it to the stranger. Upon this the fisherman said with a smile: "You must not take it amiss of her, young sir, that she has not given up to you the most comfortable seat in the

house; it is a custom among poor people, that it should belong exclusively to the aged."

"Why, husband," said the wife, with a quiet smile, "what can you be thinking of? Our guest belongs no doubt to Christian men, and how could it come into the head of the good young blood to drive old people from their chairs? Take a seat my young master," she continued, turning toward the knight; "over there, there is a right pretty little chair, only you must not move about on it too roughly, for one of its legs is no longer of the firmest." The knight fetched the chair carefully, sat down upon it good-humoredly, and it seemed to him as if he were related to this little household, and had just returned from abroad.

The three worthy people now began to talk together in the most friendly and familiar manner. With regard to the forest, about which the knight made some inquiries, the old man was not inclined to be communicative; he felt it was not a subject suited to approaching night, but the aged couple spoke freely of their home and former life, and listened also gladly when the knight recounted to them his travels, and told them that he had a castle near the source of the Danube, and that his name was Sir Huldbrand of Ringstetten. During the conversation, the stranger had already occasionally heard a splash against the little low window, as if some one were sprinkling water against it. Every time the noise occurred, the old man knit his brow with displeasure; but when at last a whole shower was dashed against the panes, and bubbled into the room through the decayed casement, he rose angrily, and called threateningly from the window: "Undine! will you for once leave off these childish tricks? and to-day, besides, there is a stranger knight with us in the cottage." All was silent without, only a suppressed laugh was audible, and the fisherman said as he returned: "You must

pardon it in her, my honored guest, and perhaps many a naughty trick besides; but she means no harm by it. It is our foster-child, Undine, and she will not wean herself from this childishness, although she has already entered her eighteenth year. But, as I said, at heart she is thoroughly good."

"You may well talk," replied the old woman, shaking her head; "when you come home from fishing or from a journey, her frolics may then be very delightful, but to have her about one the whole day long, and never to hear a sensible word, and instead of finding her a help in the housekeeping as she grows older, always to be obliged to be taking care that her follies do not completely ruin us, that is quite another thing, and the patience of a saint would be worn out at last."

"Well, well," said her husband with a smile, "you have your troubles with Undine, and I have mine with the lake. It often breaks away my dams, and tears my nets to pieces, but for all that, I have an affection for it, and so have you for the pretty child, in spite of all your crosses and vexations. Isn't it so?"

"One can't be very angry with her, certainly," said the old woman, and she smiled approvingly.

Just then the door flew open, and a beautiful, fair girl glided laughing into the room, and said: "You have only been jesting, father, for where is your guest?"

At the same moment, however, she perceived the knight, and stood fixed with astonishment before the handsome youth. Huldbrand was struck with her charming appearance, and dwelt the more earnestly on her lovely features, as he imagined it was only her surprise that gave him this brief enjoyment, and that she would presently turn from his gaze with increased bashfulness. It was, however, quite otherwise; for after having looked at him for some time, she drew near him confidently, knelt down

before him, and said, as she played with a gold medal which he wore on his breast, suspended from a rich chain: "Why, you handsome, kind guest, how have you come to our poor cottage at last? Have you been obliged then to wander through the world for years, before you could find your way to us? Do you come out of that wild forest, my beautiful knight?" The old woman's reproof allowed him no time for reply. She admonished the girl to stand up and behave herself and to go to her work. Undine, however, without making any answer drew a little foot-stool close to Huldbrand's chair, sat down upon it with her spinning, and said pleasantly: "I will work here." The old man did as parents are wont to do with spoiled children. He affected to observe nothing of Undine's naughtiness and was beginning to talk of something else. But this the girl would not let him do; she said: "I have asked our charming guest whence he comes, and he has not yet answered me."

"I come from the forest, you beautiful little vision," returned Huldbrand; and she went on to say:

"Then you must tell me how you came there, for it is usually so feared, and what marvelous adventures you met with in it, for it is impossible to escape without something of the sort."

Huldbrand felt a slight shudder at this remembrance, and looked involuntarily toward the window, for it seemed to him as if one of the strange figures he had encountered in the forest were grinning in there; but he saw nothing but the deep dark night, which had now shrouded everything without. Upon this he composed himself and was on the point of beginning his little history, when the old man interrupted him by saying: "Not so, sir knight! this is no fit hour for such things." Undine, however, sprang angrily from her little stool, and standing straight before the fisherman with her fair arms fixed in her sides,

she exclaimed: "He shall not tell his story, father? He shall not? but it is my will. He shall! He shall in spite of you!" and thus saying she stamped her pretty little foot vehemently on the floor, but she did it all with such a comically graceful air that Huldbrand now felt his gaze almost more riveted upon her in her anger than before in her gentleness.

The restrained wrath of the old man, on the contrary, burst forth violently. He severely reproved Undine's disobedience and unbecoming behavior to the stranger, and his good old wife joined with him heartily. Undine quickly retorted: "If you want to chide me, and won't do what I wish, then sleep alone in your old smoky hut!" and swift as an arrow she flew from the room, and fled into the dark night.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHAT WAY UNDINE HAD COME TO THE FISHERMAN.

HULDBRAND and the fisherman sprang from their seats and were on the point of following the angry girl. Before they reached the cottage door, however, Undine had long vanished in the shadowy darkness without, and not even the sound of her light footstep betrayed the direction of her flight. Huldbrand looked inquiringly at his host; it almost seemed to him as if the whole sweet apparition, which had suddenly merged again into the night, were nothing else than one of that band of the wonderful forms which had, but a short time since, carried on their pranks with him in the forest. But the old man murmured between his teeth: "This is not the first time that she has treated us in this way. Now we have aching hearts and sleepless eyes the whole night through; for who knows, that she may not some day come to harm, if she is thus out alone in the dark until daylight."

"Then let us for God's sake follow her," cried Huldbrand, anxiously.

"What would be the good of it?" replied the old man.

"It would be a sin were I to allow you, all alone, to follow the foolish girl in the solitary night, and my old limbs would not overtake the wild runaway, even if we knew in what direction she had gone."

"We had better at any rate call after her, and beg her to come back," said Huldbrand; and he began to call in the most earnest manner: "Undine! Undine! Pray come back!" The old man shook his head, saying, that all that shouting would help but little, for the knight had no idea how self-willed the little truant was. But still he could not forbear often calling out with him in the dark night: "Undine! Ah! dear Undine, I beg you to come back—only this once!"

It turned out, however, as the fisherman had said. No Undine was to be heard or seen, and as the old man would on no account consent that Huldbrand should go in search of the fugitive, they were at last both obliged to return to the cottage. Here they found the fire on the hearth almost gone out, and the old wife, who took Undine's flight and danger far less to heart than her husband, had already retired to rest. The old man blew up the fire, laid some dry wood on it, and by the light of the flame sought out a tankard of wine, which he placed between himself and his guest. "You, sir knight," said he, "are also anxious about that silly girl, and we would both rather chatter and drink away a part of the night than keep turning round on our rush mats trying in vain to sleep. Is it not so?" Huldbrand was well satisfied with the plan; the fisherman obliged him to take the seat of honor vacated by the good old housewife, and both drank and talked together in a manner becoming two honest and trusting men. It is true, as often as the slightest thing moved

before the windows, or even at times when nothing was moving, one of the two would look up and say: "She is coming!" Then they would be silent for a moment or two, and as nothing appeared, they would shake their heads and sigh and go on with their talk.

As, however, neither could think of anything but of Undine, they knew of nothing better to do than that the old fisherman should tell the story, and the knight should hear, in what manner Undine had first come to the cottage. He therefore began as follows:

"It is now about fifteen years ago that I was one day crossing the wild forest with my goods, on my way to the city. My wife had stayed at home, as her wont is, and at this particular time for a very good reason, for God had given us, in our tolerably advanced age, a wonderfully beautiful child. It was a little girl; and a question already arose between us, whether for the sake of the new-comer, we would not leave our lovely home that we might better bring up this dear gift of heaven in some more habitable place. Poor people indeed cannot do in such cases as you may think they ought, sir knight, but, with God's blessing, every one must do what he can. Well, the matter was tolerably in my head as I went along. This slip of land was so dear to me, and I shuddered when, amid the noise and brawls of the city, I thought to myself, 'In such scenes as these, or in one not much more quiet, thou wilt also soon make thy abode!' But at the same time I did not murmur against the good God; on the contrary, I thanked him in secret for the new-born babe; I should be telling a lie, too, were I to say, that on my journey through the wood, going or returning, anything befell me out of the common way, and at that time I had never seen any of its fearful wonders. The Lord was ever with me in those mysterious shades."

As he spoke he took his little cap from his bald head,

and remained for a time occupied with prayerful thoughts; he then covered himself again, and continued:

“On this side the forest, alas! a sorrow awaited me. My wife came to meet me with tearful eyes and clad in mourning. ‘Oh! Good God!’ I groaned, ‘where is our dear child? speak!’ ‘With him on whom you have called, dear husband,’ she replied; and we now entered the cottage together weeping silently. I looked around for the little corpse, and it was then only that I learned how it had all happened.

“My wife had been sitting with the child on the edge of the lake, and as she was playing with it, free of all fear and full of happiness, the little one suddenly bent forward, as if attracted by something very beautiful in the water. My wife saw her laugh, the dear angel, and stretch out her little hands; but in a moment she had sprung out of her mother’s arms, and had sunk beneath the watery mirror. I sought long for our little lost one; but it was all in vain; there was no trace of her to be found.

“The same evening we, childless parents, were sitting silently together in the cottage; neither of us had any desire to talk, even had our tears allowed us. We sat gazing into the fire on the hearth. Presently, we heard something rustling outside the door; it flew open, and a beautiful little girl three or four years old, richly dressed, stood on the threshold smiling at us. We were quite dumb with astonishment, and I knew not at first whether it were a vision or a reality. But I saw the water dripping from her golden hair and rich garments, and I perceived that the pretty child had been lying in the water, and needed help. ‘Wife,’ said I, ‘no one has been able to save our dear child; yet let us at any rate do for others what would have made us so blessed.’ We undressed the little one, put her to bed, and gave her something warm; at all this she spoke not a word, and only fixed her eyes, that

reflected the blue of the lake and of the sky, smilingly upon us. Next morning we quickly perceived that she had taken no harm from her wetting, and I now inquired about her parents, and how she had come here. But she gave a confused and strange account. She must have been born far from here, not only because for these fifteen years I have not been able to find out anything of her parentage, but because she then spoke, and at times still speaks, of such singular things that such as we are cannot tell but that she may have dropped upon us from the moon. She talks of golden castles, of crystal domes, and heaven knows what besides. The story that she told with most distinctness was, that she was out in a boat with her mother on the great lake, and fell into the water, and that she only recovered her senses here under the trees where she felt herself quite happy on the merry shore. We had still a great misgiving and perplexity weighing on our heart. We had, indeed, soon decided to keep the child we had found and to bring her up in the place of our lost darling; but who could tell us whether she had been baptized or not? She herself could give us no information on the matter. She generally answered our questions by saying that she well knew she was created for God's praise and glory, and that she was ready to let us do with her whatever would tend to His honor and glory.

“My wife and I thought that if she were not baptized, there was no time for delay, and that if she were, a good thing could not be repeated too often. And in pursuance of this idea, we reflected upon a good name for the child, for we now were often at a loss to know what to call her. We agreed at last that Dorothea would be the most suitable for her, for I once heard that it meant *a gift of God*, and she had surely been sent to us by God as a gift and comfort in our misery. She, on the other hand, would not hear

of this, and told us that she thought she had been called Undine by her parents, and that Undine she wished still to be called. Now this appeared to me a heathenish name, not to be found in any calendar, and I took counsel therefore of a priest in the city. He also would not hear of the name of Undine, but at my earnest request he came with me through the mysterious forest in order to perform the rite of baptism here in my cottage. The little one stood before us so prettily arrayed and looked so charming that the priest's heart was at once moved within him, and she flattered him so prettily, and braved him so merrily, that at last he could no longer remember the objections he had had ready against the name of Undine. She was therefore baptized 'Undine,' and during the sacred ceremony she behaved with great propriety and sweetness, wild and restless as she invariably was at other times. For my wife was quite right when she said that it has been hard to put up with her. If I were to tell you——"

The knight interrupted the fisherman to draw his attention to a noise, as of a rushing flood of waters, which had caught his ear during the old man's talk, and which now burst against the cottage-window with redoubled fury. Both sprang to the door. There they saw, by the light of the now risen moon, the brook which issued from the wood, widely overflowing its banks, and whirling away stones and branches of trees in its sweeping course. The storm, as if awakened by the tumult, burst forth from the mighty clouds which passed rapidly across the moon; the lake roared under the furious lashing of the wind; the trees of the little peninsula groaned from root to topmost bough, and bent, as if reeling, over the surging waters. "Undine! for Heaven's sake, Undine!" cried the two men in alarm. No answer was returned, and regardless of every other consideration, they ran out of the cottage, one in this direction, and the other in that, searching and calling.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THEY FOUND UNDINE AGAIN.

THE longer Huldbrand sought Undine beneath the shades of night, and failed to find her, the more anxious and confused did he become. The idea that Undine had been only a mere apparition of the forest, again gained ascendancy over him; indeed, amid the howling of the waves and the tempest, the cracking of the trees, and the complete transformation of a scene lately so calmly beautiful, he could almost have considered the whole peninsula with its cottage and its inhabitants as a mocking illusive vision; but from afar he still ever heard through the tumult the fisherman's anxious call for Undine, and the loud praying and singing of his aged wife. At length he came close to the brink of the swollen stream, and saw in the moonlight how it had taken its wild course directly in front of the haunted forest, so as to change the peninsula into an island. "Oh God!" he thought to himself, "if Undine has ventured a step into that fearful forest, perhaps in her charming willfulness, just because I was not allowed to tell her about it; and now the stream may be rolling between us, and she may be weeping on the other side alone, among phantoms and specters!" A cry of horror escaped him, and he clambered down some rocks and overthrown pine-stems, in order to reach the rushing stream and by wading or swimming to seek the fugitive on the other side. He remembered all the awful and wonderful things which he had encountered, even by day, under the now rustling and roaring branches of the forest. Above all it seemed to him as if a tall man in white, whom he knew but too well, was grinning and nodding on the opposite shore; but it was just these monstrous forms which

forcibly impelled him to cross the flood, as the thought seized him that Undine might be among them in the agonies of death and alone.

He had already grasped the strong branch of a pine, and was standing supported by it, in the whirling current, against which he could with difficulty maintain himself; though with a courageous spirit he advanced deeper into it. Just then a gentle voice exclaimed near him: "Venture not, venture not, the old man, the stream, is full of tricks!" He knew the sweet tones; he stood as if entranced beneath the shadows that duskily shrouded the moon, and his head swam with the swelling of the waves, which he now saw rapidly rising to his waist. Still he would not desist.

"If thou art not really there, if thou art only floating about me like a mist, then may I too cease to live and become a shadow like thee, dear, dear Undine!" Thus exclaiming aloud, he again stepped deeper into the stream. "Look round thee, oh! look round thee, beautiful but infatuated youth!" cried a voice again close beside him, and looking aside, he saw by the momentarily unveiled moon, a little island formed by the flood, on which he perceived under the interweaved branches of the overhanging trees, Undine smiling and happy, nestling in the flowery grass.

Oh! how much more gladly than before did the young man now use the aid of his pine-branch!

With a few steps he had crossed the flood which was rushing between him and the maiden, and he was standing beside her on a little spot of turf, safely guarded and screened by the good old trees. Undine had half-raised herself, and now under the green leafy tent she threw her arms round his neck, and drew him down beside her on her soft seat.

"You shall tell me your story here, beautiful friend," said she, in a low whisper; "the cross old people cannot

hear us here; and our roof of leaves is just as good a shelter as their poor cottage."

"It is heaven itself!" said Huldbrand, embracing the beautiful girl and kissing her fervently.

The old fisherman meanwhile had come to the edge of the stream, and shouted across to the two young people: "Why, sir knight, I have received you as one honest-hearted man is wont to receive another, and now here you are caressing my foster-child in secret, and letting me run hither and thither through the night in anxious search of her."

"I have only just found her myself, old father," returned the knight.

"So much the better," said the fisherman; "but now bring her across to me without delay upon firm ground."

Undine, however, would not hear of this; she declared she would rather go with the beautiful stranger, into the wild forest itself, than return to the cottage, where no one did as she wished, and from which the beautiful knight would himself depart sooner or later. Then, throwing her arms round Huldbrand, she sang with indescribable grace:

"A stream ran out of the misty vale
Its fortunes to obtain,
In the ocean's depths it found a home
And ne'er returned again."

The old fisherman wept bitterly at her song, but this did not seem to affect her particularly. She kissed and caressed her new friend, who at last said to her: "Undine, if the old man's distress does not touch your heart, it touches mine—let us go back to him."

She opened her large blue eyes in amazement at him, and spoke at last, slowly and hesitatingly: "If you think so—well, whatever you think is right to me. But the old

man yonder must first promise me that he will let you, without objection, relate to me what you saw in the wood, and—well, other things will settle themselves.”

“Come, only come,” cried the fisherman to her, unable to utter another word; and at the same time he stretched out his arms far over the rushing stream toward her, and nodded his head as if to promise the fulfillment of her request, and as he did this, his white hair fell strangely over his face, and reminded Huldbrand of the nodding white man in the forest. Without allowing himself, however, to grow confused by such an idea the young knight took the beautiful girl in his arms, and bore her over the narrow passage which the stream had forced between her little island and the shore.

The old man fell upon Undine’s neck and could not satisfy the exuberance of his joy; his good wife also came up and caressed the newly-found in the heartiest manner. Not a word of reproach passed their lips; nor was it thought of, for Undine, forgetting all her waywardness, almost overwhelmed her foster-parents with affection and fond expressions.

When at last they had recovered from the excess of their joy, day had already dawned, and had shed its purple hue over the lake; stillness had followed the storm, and the little birds were singing merrily on the wet branches. As Undine now insisted upon hearing the knight’s promised story, the aged couple smilingly and readily acceded to her desire. Breakfast was brought out under the trees which screened the cottage from the lake, and they sat down to it with contented hearts—Undine on the grass at the knight’s feet, the place chosen by herself.

Huldbrand then proceeded with his story.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THAT WHICH THE KNIGHT ENCOUNTERED IN THE
WOOD.

“It is now about eight days ago since I rode into the free imperial city, which lies on the other side of the forest. Soon after my arrival, there was a splendid tournament and running at the ring, and I spared neither my horse nor my lance. Once when I was pausing at the lists, to rest after my merry toil, and was handing back my helmet to one of my squires, my attention was attracted by a female figure of great beauty, who was standing richly attired on one of the galleries allotted to spectators.

“I asked my neighbor, and learned from him, that the name of the fair lady was Bertalda, and that she was the foster-daughter of one of the powerful dukes living in the country. I remarked that she also was looking at me, and, as it is wont to be with us young knights, I had already ridden bravely, and now pursued my course with renovated confidence and courage. In the dance that evening I was Bertalda’s partner, and I remained so throughout the festival.”

A sharp pain in his left hand, which hung down by his side, here interrupted Huldbrand’s narrative, and drew his attention to the aching part. Undine had fastened her pearly teeth upon one of his fingers, appearing at the same time very gloomy and angry. Suddenly, however, she looked up in his eyes with an expression of tender melancholy, and whispered in a soft voice: “It is your own fault.” Then she hid her face, and the knight, strangely confused and thoughtful, continued his narrative.

“This Bertalda was a haughty, wayward girl. Even on the second day she pleased me no longer as she had done on the first, and on the third day still less. Still I con-

tinued about her, because she was more pleasant to me than to any other knight, and thus it was that I begged her in jest to give me one of her gloves. 'I will give it you when you have quite alone explored the ill-famed forest,' said she, 'and can bring me tidings of its wonders.' It was not that her glove was of such importance to me, but the word had been said, and an honorable knight would not allow himself to be urged a second time to such a proof of valor."

"I think she loved you," said Undine, interrupting him.

"It seemed so," replied Huldbrand.

"Well," exclaimed the girl, laughing, "she must be stupid indeed. To drive away any one dear to her. And moreover, into an ill-omened wood. The forest and its mysteries might have waited long enough for me!"

"Yesterday morning," continued the knight, smiling kindly at Undine, "I set out on my enterprise. The stems of the trees caught the red tints of the morning light which lay brightly on the green turf, the leaves seemed whispering merrily with each other, and in my heart I could have laughed at the people who could have expected anything to terrify them in this pleasant spot. 'I shall soon have trotted through the forest there and back again,' I said to myself, with a feeling of easy gayety, and before I had even thought of it I was deep within the green shades, and could no longer perceive the plain which lay behind me. Then for the first time it struck me that I might easily lose my way in the mighty forest, and that this perhaps were the only danger which the wanderer had to fear. I therefore paused and looked round in the direction of the sun, which in the meanwhile had risen somewhat higher above the horizon. While I was thus looking up I saw something black in the branches of a lofty oak. I thought

it was a bear and I grasped my sword; but with a human voice, that sounded harsh and ugly, it called to me from above: 'If I do not nibble away the branches up here, Sir Malapert, what shall we have to roast you with at midnight?' And so saying it grinned and made the branches rustle, so that my horse grew furious and rushed forward with me before I had time to see what sort of a devil it really was."

"You must not call it so," said the old fisherman as he crossed himself; his wife did the same silently. Undine looked at the knight with sparkling eyes and said: "The best of the story is that they certainly have not roasted him yet; go on now, you beautiful youth!"

The knight continued his narration: "My horse was so wild that he almost rushed with me against the stems and branches of trees; he was dripping with sweat, and yet would not suffer himself to be held in. At last he went straight in the direction of a rocky precipice; then it suddenly seemed to me as if a tall white man threw himself across the path of my wild steed; the horse trembled with fear and stopped; I recovered my hold of him, and for the first time perceived that my deliverer was no white man, but a brook of silvery brightness, rushing down from a hill by my side and crossing and impeding my horse's course."

"Thanks, dear Brook," exclaimed Undine, clapping her little hands. The old man, however, shook his head and looked down in deep thought.

"I had scarcely settled myself in the saddle," continued Huldbrand, "and seized the reins firmly, when a wonderful little man stood at my side, diminutive, and ugly beyond conception. His complexion was of a yellowish brown, and his nose not much smaller than the rest of his entire person. At the same time he kept grinning with stupid courtesy, exhibiting his huge mouth, and making a thousand scrapes and bows to me. As this farce was now be-

coming inconvenient to me, I thanked him briefly and turned about my still trembling steed, thinking either to seek another adventure, or in case I met with none, to find my way back, for during my wild chase the sun had already passed the meridian; but the little fellow sprang round with the speed of lightning and stood again before my horse. 'Room!' I cried, angrily; 'the animal is wild and may easily run over you.' 'Ay, ay!' snarled the imp, with a grin still more horribly stupid. 'Give me first some drink-money, for I have stopped your horse; without me you and your horse would be now both lying in the stony ravine; ugh!' 'Don't make any more faces,' said I, 'and take your money, even if you are telling lies; for see, it was the good brook there that saved me, and not you, you miserable wight!' And at the same time I dropped a piece of gold into his grotesque cap, which he had taken off in his begging. I then trotted on; but he screamed after me, and suddenly with inconceivable quickness was at my side. I urged my horse into a gallop; the imp ran too, making at the same time strange contortions with his body, half-ridiculous, half-horrible, and holding up the gold-piece, he cried, at every leap, 'False money! false coin! false coin! false money!'—and this he uttered with such a hollow sound that one would have supposed that after every scream he would have fallen dead to the ground.

"His horrid red tongue moreover hung far out of his mouth. I stopped, perplexed, and asked: 'What do you mean by this screaming? take another piece of gold, take two, but leave me.' He then began again his hideous burlesque of politeness, and snarled out: 'Not gold, not gold, my young gentleman. I have too much of that trash myself, as I will show you at once!'

"Suddenly it seemed to me as if I could see through the solid soil as though it were green glass and the smooth earth were as round as a ball; and within, a multi-

tude of goblins were making sport with silver and gold; head over heels they were rolling about, pelting each other in jest with the precious metals, and provokingly blowing the gold-dust in each other's eyes. My hideous companion stood partly within and partly without; he ordered the others to reach him up heaps of gold, and showing it to me with a laugh, he then flung it back again with a ringing noise into the immeasurable abyss.

"He then showed the piece of gold I had given him to the goblins below, and they laughed themselves half-dead over it and hissed at me. At last they all pointed at me with their metal-stained fingers, and more and more wildly, and more and more densely, and more and more madly, the swarm of spirits came clambering up to me. I was seized with terror as my horse had been before; I put spurs to him, and I know not how far I galloped for the second time wildly into the forest.

"At length, when I again halted, the coolness of evening was around me. Through the branches of the trees I saw a white foot-path gleaming, which I fancied must lead from the forest toward the city. I was anxious to work my way in that direction; but a face perfectly white and indistinct, with features ever changing, kept peering at me between the leaves; I tried to avoid it, but wherever I went it appeared also. Enraged at this, I determined at last to ride at it, when it gushed forth volumes of foam upon me and my horse, obliging us half-blinded to make a rapid retreat. Thus it drove us step by step ever away from the foot-path, leaving the way open to us only in one direction. When we advanced in this direction, it kept indeed close behind us, but did not do us the slightest harm.

"Looking around at it occasionally, I perceived that the white face that had besprinkled us with foam belonged to a form equally white and of gigantic stature. Many a

time I thought that it was a moving stream, but I could never convince myself on the subject. Wearied out, the horse and his rider yielded to the impelling power of the white man, who kept nodding his head, as if he would say, 'Quite right, quite right!' And thus at last we came out here to the end of the forest, where I saw the turf, and the lake, and your little cottage, and where the tall white man disappeared."

"It's well that he's gone," said the old fisherman; and now he began to talk of the best way by which his guest could return to his friends in the city. Upon this Undine began to laugh slyly to herself; Huldbrand observed it, and said: "I thought you were glad to see me here; why then do you now rejoice when my departure is talked of?"

"Because you cannot go away," replied Undine. "Just try it once, to cross that overflowed forest stream with a boat, with your horse, or alone, as you may fancy. Or rather don't try it, for you would be dashed to pieces by the stones and trunks of trees which are carried down by it with the speed of lightning. And as to the lake, I know it well; father dare not venture out far enough with his boat."

Huldbrand rose, smiling, in order to see whether things were as Undine had said; the old man accompanied him, and the girl danced merrily along by their side. They found everything, indeed, as Undine had described, and the knight was obliged to submit to remain on the little tongue of land, that had become an island, till the flood should subside. As the three were returning to the cottage after their ramble, the knight whispered in the ear of the little maiden: "Well, how is it my pretty Undine—are you angry at my remaining?"

"Ah!" she replied, peevishly, "let me alone. If I had

not bitten you, who knows how much of Bertalda would have appeared in your story?"

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE KNIGHT LIVED ON THE LITTLE PROMONTORY.

AFTER having been much driven to and fro in the world, you have perhaps, my dear reader, reached at length some spot where all was well with thee; where the love for home and its calm peace, innate to all, has again sprung up within thee; where thou hast thought that this home was rich with all the flowers of childhood and of the purest, deepest love that rests upon the graves of those that are gone, and thou hast felt it must be good to dwell here and to build habitations. Even if thou hast erred in this, and hast had afterward bitterly to atone for the error, that is nothing to the purpose now, and thou wouldst not, indeed, voluntarily sadden thyself with the unpleasant recollection. But recall that inexpressibly sweet foreboding, that angelic sense of peace, and thou wilt know somewhat of the knight Huldbrand's feelings during his abode on the little promontory.

He often perceived with hearty satisfaction that the forest stream rolled along every day more wildly, making its bed ever broader and broader, and prolonging his sojourn on the island to an indefinite period. Part of the day he rambled about with an old cross-bow, which he had found in a corner of the cottage and had repaired; and, watching for the water-fowl, he killed all that he could for the cottage kitchen. When he brought his booty home, Undine rarely neglected to upbraid him with having so cruelly deprived the happy birds of life; indeed she often wept bitterly at the sight he placed before her. But if he came home another time without having shot anything

she scolded him no less seriously, since now, from his carelessness and want of skill, they had to be satisfied with living on fish. He always delighted heartily in her graceful little scoldings, all the more as she generally strove to compensate for her ill humor by the sweetest caresses.

The old people took pleasure in the intimacy of the young pair; they regarded them as betrothed, or even as already united in marriage, and living on this isolated spot, as a succor and support to them in their old age. It was this same sense of seclusion that suggested the idea also to Huldbrand's mind that he was already Undine's accepted one. He felt as if there were no world beyond these surrounding waters, or as if he could never recross them to mingle with other men; and when at times his grazing horse would neigh as if inquiringly to remind him of knightly deeds, or when the coat of arms on his embroidered saddle and horse-gear shone sternly upon him, or when his beautiful sword would suddenly fall from the nail on which it was hanging in the cottage, gliding from the scabbard as it fell, he would quiet the doubts of his mind by saying: "Undine is no fisherman's daughter; she belongs in all probability to some illustrious family abroad." There was only one thing to which he had a strong aversion, and this was, when the old dame reproved Undine in his presence. The wayward girl, it is true, laughed at it for the most part, without attempting to conceal her mirth; but it seemed to him as if his honor were concerned, and yet he could not blame the old fisherman's wife, for Undine always deserved at least ten times as many reproofs as she received; so, in his heart he felt the balance in favor of the old woman, and his whole life flowed onward in calm enjoyment.

There came, however, an interruption at last. The fisherman and the knight had been accustomed at their

midday meal, and also in the evening when the wind roared without, as it was always wont to do toward night, to enjoy together a flask of wine. But now the store which the fisherman had from time to time brought with him from the town, was exhausted, and the two men were quite out of humor in consequence.

Undine laughed at them excessively all day, but they were neither of them merry enough to join in her jests as usual. Toward evening she went out of the cottage to avoid, as she said, two such long and tiresome faces. As twilight advanced, there were again tokens of a storm, and the water rushed and roared. Full of alarm, the knight and the fisherman sprang to the door, to bring home the girl, remembering the anxiety of that night when Huldbrand had first come to the cottage. Undine, however, met them, clapping her little hands with delight. "What will you give me," she said, "to provide you with wine?" or rather, "you need not give me anything," she continued, "for I am satisfied if you will look merrier and be in better spirits than you have been throughout this whole wearisome day. Only come with me; the forest stream has driven ashore a cask, and I will be condemned to sleep through a whole week if it is not a wine-cask." The men followed her, and in a sheltered creek on the shore, they actually found a cask, which inspired them with the hope that it contained the generous drink for which they were thirsting.

They at once rolled it as quickly as possible toward the cottage, for the western sky was overcast with heavy storm-clouds, and they could observe in the twilight the waves of the lake raising their white, foaming heads, as if looking out for the rain which was presently to pour down upon them. Undine helped the men as much as she was able, and when the storm of rain suddenly burst over them, she said, with a merry threat to the heavy clouds: "Come,

come, take care that you don't wet us; we are still some way from shelter." The old man reproved her for this, as simple presumption, but she laughed softly to herself, and no mischief befell any one in consequence of her levity. Nay, more; contrary to all expectation, they reached the comfortable hearth with their booty perfectly dry, and it was not till they had opened the cask, and had proved that it contained some wonderfully excellent wine, that the rain burst forth from the dark cloud, and the storm raged among the tops of the trees, and over the agitated billows of the lake.

Several bottles were soon filled from the great cask, which promised a supply for many days, and they were sitting drinking and jesting round the glowing fire, feeling comfortably secured from the raging storm without. Suddenly the old fisherman became very grave and said: "Ah, great God! here we are rejoicing over this rich treasure, and he to whom it once belonged, and of whom the floods have robbed it, has probably lost his precious life in their waters."

"That he has not," declared Undine, as she smilingly filled the knight's cup to the brim.

But Huldbrand replied: "By my honor, old father, if I knew where to find and to rescue him, no knightly errand and no danger would I shirk. So much, however, I can promise you, that if ever again I reach more inhabited lands, I will find out the owner of this wine or his heirs, and requite it twofold, nay, threefold."

This delighted the old man; he nodded approvingly to the knight, and drained his cup with a better conscience and greater pleasure.

Undine, however, said to Huldbrand: "Do as you will with your gold and your reimbursement; but you spoke foolishly about the venturing out in search; I should cry my eyes out, if you were lost in the attempt, and isn't it

true, that you would yourself rather stay with me and the good wine?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Huldbrand, smiling.

"Then," said Undine, "you spoke unwisely. For charity begins at home, and what do other people concern us?"

The old woman turned away sighing and shaking her head; the fisherman forgot his wonted affection for the pretty girl and scolded her.

"It sounds exactly," said he, as he finished his reproof, "as if Turks and heathens had brought you up; may God forgive both me and you, you spoiled child."

"Well," replied Undine, "for all that, it is what I feel, let who will have brought me up, and all your words can't help that."

"Silence!" exclaimed the fisherman, and Undine, who, in spite of her pertness, was exceedingly fearful, shrank from him, and moving tremblingly toward Huldbrand, asked him in a soft tone: "Are you also angry, dear friend?"

The knight pressed her tender hand and stroked her hair. He could say nothing, for vexation at the old man's severity toward Undine closed his lips; and thus the two couples sat opposite to each other, with angry feelings and embarrassed silence.

CHAPTER VI.

OF A NUPTIAL CEREMONY.

A LOW knocking at the door was heard in the midst of this stillness, startling all the inmates of the cottage; for there are times when a little circumstance, happening quite unexpectedly, can unduly alarm us. But there was here the additional cause of alarm that the enchanted

forest lay so near, and that the little promontory seemed just now inaccessible to human beings. They looked at each other doubtingly, as the knocking was repeated accompanied by a deep groan, and the knight sprang to reach his sword. But the old man whispered softly: "If it be what I fear, no weapon will help us."

Undine meanwhile approached the door and called out angrily and boldly: "Spirits of the earth, if you wish to carry on your mischief, Kühleborn shall teach you something better."

The terror of the rest was increased by these mysterious words; they looked fearfully at the girl, and Huldbrand was just regaining courage enough to ask what she meant, when a voice said without: "I am no spirit of the earth, but a spirit indeed still within its earthly body. You within the cottage, if you fear God and will help me, open to me." At these words, Undine had already opened the door, and had held a lamp out in the stormy night, by which they perceived an aged priest standing there, who stepped back in terror at the unexpected sight of the beautiful maiden. He might well think that witchcraft and magic were at work when such a lovely form appeared at such an humble cottage door; he therefore began to pray: "All good spirits praise the Lord!"

"I am no specter," said Undine, smiling; "do I then look so ugly? Besides you may see the holy words do not frighten me. I too know of God, and understand how to praise Him; every one to be sure in his own way, for so He has created us. Come in, venerable father; you come among good people."

The holy man entered, bowing and looking round him, with a profound, yet tender demeanor. But the water was dropping from every fold of his dark garment, and from his white long white beard and from his gray locks. The fisherman and the knight took him to another apart-

ment and furnished him with other clothes, while they gave the women his own wet attire to dry. The aged stranger thanked them humbly and courteously, but he would on no account accept the knight's splendid mantle, which was offered to him; but he chose instead an old gray overcoat belonging to the fisherman. They then returned to the apartment, and the good old dame immediately vacated her easy-chair for the reverend father, and would not rest till he had taken possession of it. "For," said she, "you are old and exhausted, and you are more-over a man of God." Undine pushed under the stranger's feet her little stool, on which she had been wont to sit by the side of Huldbrand, and she showed herself in every way most gentle and kind in her care of the good old man. Huldbrand whispered some raillery at it in her ear, but she replied very seriously: "He is a servant of him who created us all; holy things are not to be jested with." The knight and the fisherman then refreshed their reverend guest with food and wine, and when he had somewhat recovered himself, he began to relate how he had the day before set out from his cloister, which lay far beyond the great lake, intending to travel to the bishop, in order to acquaint him with the distress into which the monastery and its tributary villages had fallen on account of the extraordinary floods.

After a long, circuitous route, which these very floods had obliged him to take, he had been this day compelled, toward evening, to procure the aid of a couple of good boatmen to cross an arm of the lake, which had overflowed its banks.

"Scarcely however," continued he, "had our small craft touched the waves, than that furious tempest burst forth which is now raging over our heads. It seemed as if the waters had only waited for us, to commence their wildest whirling dance with our little boat. The oars

were soon torn out of the hands of my men, and were dashed by the force of the waves further and further beyond our reach. We ourselves, yielding to the resistless powers of nature, helplessly drifted over the surging billows of the lake toward your distant shore, which we already saw looming through the mist and foam. Presently our boat turned round and round as in a giddy whirlpool; I know not whether it was upset, or whether I fell overboard. In a vague terror of inevitable death I drifted on, till a wave cast me here, under the trees on your island."

"Yes, island!" cried the fisherman; "a short time ago it was only a point of land; but now, since the forest-stream and the lake have become well-nigh bewitched, things are quite different with us."

"I remarked something of the sort," said the priest, "as I crept along the shore in the dark, and hearing nothing but the uproar around me, I at last perceived that a beaten foot-path disappeared just in the direction from which the sound proceeded. I now saw the light in your cottage, and ventured hither, and I cannot sufficiently thank my heavenly Father that after preserving me from the waters, He has led me to such good and pious people as you are; and I feel this all the more, as I do not know whether I shall ever behold any other beings in this world, except those I now address."

"What do you mean?" asked the fisherman.

"Do you know then how long this commotion of the elements is to last?" replied the holy man. "And I am old in years. Easily enough may the stream of my life run itself out before the overflowing of the forest-stream may subside. And indeed it were not impossible that more and more of the foaming waters may force their way between you and yonder forest, until you are so far sundered from the rest of the world that your little fishing-boat will no longer be sufficient to carry you across, and

the inhabitants of the continent in the midst of their diversions will have entirely forgotten you in your old age."

The fisherman's wife started at this, crossed herself and exclaimed, "God forbid!" But her husband looked at her with a smile, and said: "What creatures we are after all! even were it so, things would not be very different—at least not for you, dear wife—than they now are. For have you for many years been further than the edge of the forest? and have you seen any other human beings than Undine and myself? The knight and this holy man have only come to us lately. They will remain with us if we do become a forgotten island; so you would even be a gainer by it after all."

"I don't know," said the old woman; "it is somehow a gloomy thought, when one imagines that one is irrecoverably separated from other people, although, were it otherwise, one might neither know nor see them."

"Then you will remain with us! then you will remain with us!" whispered Undine, in a low, half-singing tone, as she nestled closer to Huldbrand's side. But he was absorbed in the deep and strange visions of his own mind.

The region on the other side of the forest-river seemed to dissolve into distance during the priest's last words; and the blooming island upon which he lived grew more green, and smiled more freshly in his mind's vision. His beloved one glowed as the fairest rose of this little spot of earth, and even of the whole world, and the priest was actually there. Added to this, at that moment an angry glance from the old dame was directed at the beautiful girl, because even in the presence of the reverend father she leaned so closely on the knight, and it seemed as if a torrent of reproving words were on the point of following. Presently, turning to the priest, Huldbrand broke forth. "Venerable father, you see before you here a pair pledged to each other; and if this maiden and these good old people

have no objection, you shall unite us this very evening." The aged couple were extremely surprised. They had, it is true, hitherto often thought of something of the sort, but they had never yet expressed it, and when the knight now spoke thus, it came upon them as something wholly new and unprecedented.

Undine had become suddenly grave, and looked down thoughtfully while the priest inquired respecting the circumstances of the case, and asked if the old people gave their consent. After much discussion together, the matter was settled; the old dame went to arrange the bridal chamber for the young people, and to look out two consecrated tapers which she had had in her possession for some time, and which she thought essential to the nuptial ceremony. The knight in the meanwhile examined his gold chain, from which he wished to disengage two rings, that he might make an exchange of them with his bride.

She, however, observing what he was doing, started up from her reverie, and exclaimed: "Not so! my parents have not sent me into the world quite destitute; on the contrary, they must have anticipated with certainty that such an evening as this would come." Thus saying, she quickly left the room and reappeared in a moment with two costly rings, one of which she gave to her bridegroom, and kept the other for herself. The old fisherman was extremely astonished at this, and still more so his wife, who just then entered, for neither had ever seen these jewels in the child's possession.

"My parents," said Undine, "sewed these little things into the beautiful frock which I had on, when I came to you. They forbid me, moreover, to mention them to any one before my wedding evening, so I secretly took them, and kept them concealed until now."

The priest interrupted all further questionings by lighting the consecrated tapers, which he placed upon a table, and

summoned the bridal pair to stand opposite to him. He then gave them to each other with a few short solemn words; the elder couple gave their blessing to the younger, and the bride, trembling and thoughtful, leaned upon the knight. Then the priest suddenly said: "You are strange people after all. Why did you tell me you were the only people here on the island? and during the whole ceremony, a tall stately man, in a white mantle, has been looking at me through the window opposite. He must still be standing before the door, to see if you will invite him to come into the house."

"God forbid," said the old dame with a start; the fisherman shook his head in silence, and Huldbrand sprang to the window. It seemed even to him as if he could still see a white streak, but it soon completely disappeared in the darkness. He convinced the priest that he must have been absolutely mistaken, and they all sat down together round the hearth.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT FURTHER HAPPENED ON THE EVENING OF THE WEDDING.

BOTH before and during the ceremony, Undine had shown herself gentle and quiet; but it now seemed as if all the wayward humors which rioted within her, burst forth all the more boldly and unrestrainedly. She teased her bridegroom and her foster-parents, and even the holy man whom she had so lately revered, with all sorts of childish tricks; and when the old woman was about to reprove her, she was quickly silenced by a few grave words from the knight, speaking of Undine now as his wife. Nevertheless the knight himself was equally little pleased with Undine's childish behavior; but no signs, and no reproachful words

were of any avail. It is true, whenever the bride noticed her husband's dissatisfaction—and this occurred occasionally—she became more quiet, sat down by his side, caressed him, whispered something smilingly into his ear, and smoothed the wrinkles that were gathering on his brow. But immediately afterward, some wild freak would again lead her to return to her ridiculous proceedings, and matters would be worse than before. At length the priest said in a serious and kind tone: "My fair young maiden, no one indeed can look at you without delight; but remember so to attune your soul betimes, that it may ever harmonize with that of your wedded husband."

"Soul!" said Undine, laughing; "that sounds pretty enough, and may be a very edifying and useful caution for most people. But when one hasn't a soul at all, I beg you, what is there to attune then? and that is my case." The priest was silent, and deeply wounded and with holy displeasure he turned his face from the girl. She however went up to him caressingly, and said: "No! listen to me first, before you look angry, for your look of anger gives me pain, and you must not give pain to any creature who has done you no wrong—only have patience with me, and I will tell you properly what I mean?"

It was evident that she was preparing herself to explain something in detail, but suddenly she hesitated, as if seized with an inward shuddering, and burst out into a flood of tears. They none of them knew what to make of this ebullition, and filled with various apprehensions they gazed at her in silence. At length, wiping away her tears, and looking earnestly at the reverend man, she said: "There must be something beautiful, but at the same time extremely awful about a soul. Tell me, holy sir, were it not better that we never shared such a gift?" She was silent again as if waiting for an answer,

and her tears had ceased to flow. All in the cottage had risen from their seats and had stepped back from her with horror. She, however, seemed to have eyes for no one but the holy man; her features wore an expression of fearful curiosity, which appeared terrible to those who saw her. "The soul must be a heavy burden," she continued, as no one answered her, "very heavy! for even its approaching image overshadows me with anxiety and sadness. And, ah! I was so light-hearted and so merry till now!" And she burst into a fresh flood of tears, and covered her face with the drapery she wore. Then the priest went up to her with a solemn air, and spoke to her, and conjured her by the name of the Most Holy to cast aside the veil that enveloped her, if any spirit of evil possessed her. But she sank on her knees before him, repeating all the sacred words he uttered, praising God, and protesting that she wished well with the whole world.

Then at last the priest said to the knight: "Sir bridegroom, I will leave you alone with her whom I have united to you in marriage. So far as I can discover there is nothing of evil in her, but much indeed that is mysterious. I commend to you — prudence, love, and fidelity." So saying, he went out, and the fisherman and his wife followed him crossing themselves.

Undine had sunk on her knees; she unveiled her face and said, looking timidly round on Huldbrand: "Alas! you will surely now not keep me as your own; and yet I have done no evil, poor child that I am!" As she said this, she looked so exquisitely graceful and touching, that her bridegroom forgot all the horror he had felt, and all the mystery that clung to her, and hastening to her he raised her in his arms. She smiled through her tears; it was a smile like the morning-light playing on a little stream. "You cannot leave me," she whispered, with confident security, stroking the knight's cheek with her

tender hand. Huldbrand tried to dismiss the fearful thoughts that still lurked in the background of his mind, persuading him that he was married to a fairy or to some malicious and mischievous being of the spirit world, only the single question half unawares escaped his lips: "My little Undine, tell me this one thing, what was it you said of spirits of the earth and of Kühleborn, when the priest knocked at the door?"

"It was nothing but fairy tales!—children's fairy tales!" said Undine, with all her wonted gayety; "I frightened you at first with them, and then you frightened me, that's the end of our story and of our nuptial evening."

"Nay! that it isn't," said the knight, intoxicated with love, and extinguishing the tapers, he bore his beautiful beloved to the bridal chamber by the light of the moon which shone brightly through the windows.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAY AFTER THE WEDDING.

THE fresh light of the morning awoke the young married pair. Wonderful and horrible dreams had disturbed Huldbrand's rest; he had been haunted by specters, who, grinning at him by stealth, had tried to disguise themselves as beautiful women, and from beautiful women they all at once assumed the faces of dragons, and when he started up from these hideous visions, the moonlight shone pale and cold into the room; terrified he looked at Undine, who still lay in unaltered beauty and grace. Then he would press a light kiss upon her rosy lips, and would fall asleep again only to be awakened by new terrors. After he had reflected on all this, now that he was fully awake, he reproached himself for any doubt that could have led him into error with regard to his beautiful wife.

He begged her to forgive him for the injustice he had done her, but she only held out to him her fair hand, sighed deeply and remained silent. But a glance of exquisite fervor beamed from her eyes such as he had never seen before, carrying with it the full assurance that Undine bore him no ill-will. He then rose cheerfully and left her, to join his friends in the common apartment.

He found the three sitting round the hearth, with an air of anxiety about them, as if they dared not venture to speak aloud. The priest seemed to be praying in his inmost spirit that all evil might be averted. When, however, they saw the young husband come forth so cheerfully the careworn expression of their faces vanished.

The old fisherman even began to jest with the knight, so pleasantly that the aged wife smiled good-humoredly as she listened to them. Undine at length made her appearance. All rose to meet her, and all stood still with surprise, for the young wife seemed so strange to them and yet the same. The priest was the first to advance toward her, with paternal affection beaming in his face, and, as he raised his hand to bless her, the beautiful woman sank reverently on her knees before him. With a few humble and gracious words she begged him to forgive her for any foolish things she might have said the evening before, and entreated him in an agitated tone to pray for the welfare of her soul. She then rose, kissed her foster-parents, and thanking them for all the goodness they had shown her, she exclaimed: "Oh! I now feel in my innermost heart, how much, how infinitely much, you have done for me, dear, kind people!" She could not at first desist from her caresses, but scarcely had she perceived that the old woman was busy in preparing breakfast, than she went to the hearth, cooked and arranged the meal, and would not suffer the good old mother to take the least trouble.

She continued thus throughout the whole day, quiet,

kind, and attentive—at once a little matron and a tender, bashful girl. The three who had known her longest, expected every moment to see some whimsical vagary of her capricious spirit burst forth. But they waited in vain for it. Undine remained as mild and gentle as an angel. The holy father could not take his eyes from her, and he said repeatedly to the bridegroom: “The goodness of heaven, sir, has intrusted a treasure to you yesterday through me, unworthy as I am; cherish it as you ought, and it will promote your temporal and eternal welfare.”

Toward evening Undine was hanging on the knight's arm with humble tenderness, and drew him gently out of the door, where the declining sun was shining pleasantly on the fresh grass, and upon the tall, slender stems of the trees. The eyes of the young wife were moist, as with the dew of sadness and love, and a tender and fearful secret seemed hovering on her lips, which, however, was only disclosed by scarcely audible sighs. She led her husband onward and onward in silence; when he spoke, she only answered him with looks, in which, it is true, there lay no direct reply to his inquiries, but a whole heaven of love and timid devotion. Thus they reached the edge of the swollen forest stream, and the knight was astonished to see it rippling along in gentle waves, without a trace of its former wildness and swell. “By the morning it will be quite dry,” said the beautiful wife, in a regretful tone, “and you can then travel away wherever you will, without anything to hinder you.”

“Not without you, my little Undine,” replied the knight, laughing; “remember, even if I wished to desert you, the church, and the spiritual powers, and the emperor, and the empire would interpose and bring the fugitive back again.”

“All depends upon you, all depends upon you,” whis-

pered his wife, half-weeping and half-smiling. "I think, however, nevertheless, that you will keep me with you; I love you so heartily. Now carry me across to that little island that lies before us. The matter shall be decided there. I could easily indeed glide through the rippling waves, but it is so restful in your arms, and if you were to cast me off, I shall have sweetly rested in them once more for the last time." Huldbrand, full as he was of strange fear and emotion, knew not what to reply. He took her in his arms and carried her across, remembering now for the first time that this was the same little island from which he had borne her back to the old fisherman on that first night. On the further side he put her down on the soft grass, and was on the point of placing himself lovingly near his beautiful burden, when she said: "No, there opposite to me! I will read my sentence in your eyes, before your lips speak; now, listen attentively to what I will relate to you." And she began:

"You must know, my loved one, that there are beings in the elements which almost appear like mortals, and which rarely allow themselves to become visible to your race. Wonderful salamanders glitter and sport in the flames; lean and malicious gnomes dwell deep within the earth; spirits, belonging to the air, wander through the forests, and a vast family of water-spirits live in the lakes, and streams, and brooks. In resounding domes of crystal, through which the sky looks in with its sun and stars, these latter spirits find their beautiful abode; lofty trees of coral with blue and crimson fruits gleam in their gardens; they wander over the pure sand of the sea, and among lovely variegated shells, and amid all exquisite treasures of the old world, which the present is no longer worthy to enjoy; all these the floods have covered with their secret veils of silver, and the noble monuments sparkle below, stately and solemn, and bedewed by the

loving waters which allure from them many a beautiful moss-flower and entwining cluster of sea-grass. Those, however, who dwell there are very fair and lovely to behold, and for the most part are more beautiful than human beings. Many a fisherman has been so fortunate as to surprise some tender mermaid as she rose above the waters and sang. He would tell afar of her beauty, and such wonderful beings have been given the name of Undines. You, however, are now actually beholding an Undine."

The knight tried to persuade himself that his beautiful wife was under the spell of one of her strange humors, and that she was taking pleasure in teasing him with one of her extravagant inventions. But repeatedly as he said this to himself, he could not believe it for a moment; a strange shudder passed through him; unable to utter a word, he stared at the beautiful narrator with an immovable gaze. Undine shook her head sorrowfully, drew a deep sigh, and then proceeded as follows:

"Our condition would be far superior to that of other human beings—for human beings we call ourselves, being similar to them in form and culture—but there is one evil peculiar to us. We and our like in the other elements, vanish into dust and pass away, body and spirit, so that not a vestige of us remains behind; and when you mortals hereafter awake to a purer life, we remain with the sand and the sparks and the wind and the waves. Hence we have also no souls; the element moves us, and is often obedient to us while we live, though it scatters us to dust when we die; and we are merry, without having aught to grieve us—merry as the nightingales and the little gold-fishes and other pretty children of nature. But all things aspire to be higher than they are. Thus, my father, who is a powerful water-prince in the Mediterranean Sea, desired that his only daughter should become possessed of a

soul, even though she must then endure many of the sufferings of those thus endowed. Such as we are, however, can only obtain a soul by the closest union of affection with one of your human race. I am now possessed of a soul, and my soul thanks you, my inexpressibly beloved one, and it will ever thank you, if you do not make my whole life miserable. For what is to become of me, if you avoid and reject me? Still, I would not retain you by deceit. And if you mean to reject me, do so now, and return alone to the shore. I will dive into this brook, which is my uncle; and here in the forest, far removed from other friends, he passes his strange and solitary life. He is, however, powerful, and is esteemed and beloved by many great streams; and as he brought me hither to the fisherman, a light-hearted, laughing child, he will take me back again to my parents, a loving, suffering and soul-endowed woman."

She was about to say still more, but Huldbrand embraced her with the most heartfelt emotion and love, and bore her back again to the shore. It was not till he reached it, that he swore amid tears and kisses, never to forsake his sweet wife, calling himself more happy than the Greek Pygmalion, whose beautiful statue received life from Venus and became his loved one. In endearing confidence, Undine walked back to the cottage, leaning on his arm; feeling now for the first time, with all her heart, how little she ought to regret the forsaken crystal palaces of her mysterious father.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE KNIGHT TOOK HIS YOUNG WIFE WITH HIM.

WHEN Huldbrand awoke from his sleep on the following morning, and missed his beautiful wife from his side, he began to indulge again in the strange thoughts, that his marriage and the charming Undine herself were but fleeting and deceptive illusions. But at the same moment she entered the room, sat down beside him, and said : "I have been out rather early to see if my uncle keeps his word. He has already led all the waters back again into his own calm channel, and he now flows through the forest, solitarily and dreamily as before. His friends in the water and the air have also returned to repose; all will again go on quietly and regularly, and you can travel homeward when you will, dry-shod." It seemed to Huldbrand as though he were in a waking dream, so little could he reconcile himself to the strange relationship of his wife. Nevertheless he made no remark on the matter, and the exquisite grace of his bride soon lulled to rest every uneasy misgiving. When he was afterward standing before the door with her, and looking over the green peninsula with its boundary of clear waters, he felt so happy in this cradle of his love, that he exclaimed : "Why shall we travel so soon as to-day? We shall scarcely find more pleasant days in the world yonder than those we have spent in this quiet little shelter. Let us yet see the sun go down here twice or thrice more."

"As my lord wills," replied Undine, humbly. "It is only that the old people will, at all events, part from me with pain, and when they now for the first time perceive the true soul within me, and how I can now heartily love and honor, their feeble eyes will be dimmed with plentiful tears. At present they consider my quietness and gentle-

ness of no better promise than before, like the calmness of the lake when the air is still; and, as matters now are, they will soon learn to cherish a flower or a tree as they have cherished me. Do not, therefore, let me reveal to them this newly-bestowed and loving heart, just at the moment when they must lose it for this world; and how could I conceal it, if we remain longer together?"

Huldbrand conceded the point; he went to the aged people and talked with them over the journey, which he proposed to undertake immediately. The holy father offered to accompany the young married pair, and, after a hasty farewell, he and the knight assisted the beautiful bride to mount her horse, and walked with rapid step by her side over the dry channel of the forest-stream into the wood beyond. Undine wept silently but bitterly, and the old people gave loud expression to their grief. It seemed as if they had a presentiment of all they were now losing in their foster-child.

The three travelers had reached in silence the densest shades of the forest. It must have been a fair sight, under that green canopy of leaves, to see Undine's lovely form, as she sat on her noble and richly ornamented steed, with the venerable priest in the white garb of his order on one side of her, and on the other the blooming young knight in his gay and splendid attire, with his sword at his girdle. Huldbrand had no eyes but for his beautiful wife; Undine, who had dried her tears, had no eyes but for him, and they soon fell into a mute, voiceless converse of glance and gesture, from which they were only roused at length by the low talking of the reverend father with a fourth traveler, who in the meanwhile had joined them unobserved.

He wore a white garment almost resembling the dress of the priest's order, except that his hood hung low over his face, and his whole attire floated round him in such vast

folds that he was obliged every moment to gather it up, and throw it over his arm, or dispose of it in some way, and yet it did not in the least seem to impede his movements. When the young couple first perceived him, he was just saying: "And so, venerable sir, I have now dwelt for many years here in the forest, and yet no one could call me a hermit, in your sense of the word. For, as I said, I know nothing of penance, and I do not think I have any especial need of it. I love the forest only for this reason, that its beauty is quite peculiar to itself, and it amuses me to pass along in my flowing white garments among the leaves and dusky shadows, while now and then a sweet sunbeam shines down unexpectedly upon me."

"You are a very strange man," replied the priest, "and I should like to be more closely acquainted with you."

"And to pass from one thing to another, who may you be yourself?" asked the stranger.

"I am called Father Heilmann," said the holy man; "and I come from the monastery of 'our Lady' which lies on the other side of the lake."

"Indeed," replied the stranger; "my name is Kühleborn, and so far as courtesy is concerned, I might claim the title of Lord of Kühleborn, or free Lord of Kühleborn; for I am as free as the birds in the forest and perhaps a little more so. For example, I have now something to say to the young lady there." And before they were aware of his intention, he was at the other side of the priest, close beside Undine, stretching himself up to whisper something in her ear.

But she turned from him with alarm, and exclaimed: "I have nothing more to do with you."

"Ho, ho," laughed the stranger, "what is this immensely grand marriage you have made, that you don't know your own relations any longer? Have you forgotten your uncle Kühleborn, who so faithfully bore you on his back through this region?"

"I beg you, nevertheless," replied Undine, "not to appear in my presence again. I am now afraid of you; and suppose my husband should learn to avoid me when he sees me in such strange company and with such relations!"

"My little niece," said Kühleborn, "you must not forget that I am with you here as a guide; the spirits of earth that haunt this place might otherwise play some of their stupid pranks with you. Let me therefore go quietly on with you; the old priest there remembered me better than you appear to have done, for he assured me just now that I seemed familiar to him, and that I must have been with him in the boat, out of which he fell into the water. I was so, truly enough; for I was the water-spout that carried him out of it and washed him safely ashore for your wedding."

Undine and the knight turned toward Father Heilmann; but he seemed walking on, as in a sort of dream, and no longer to be conscious of all that was passing. Undine then said to Kühleborn: "I see yonder the end of the forest. We no longer need your help, and nothing causes us alarm but yourself. I beg you, therefore, in all love and good will, vanish, and let us proceed in peace."

Kühleborn seemed to become angry at this; his countenance assumed a frightful expression, and he grinned fiercely at Undine, who screamed aloud and called upon her husband for assistance. As quick as lightning, the knight sprang to the other side of the horse, and aimed his sharp sword at Kühleborn's head. But the sword cut through a waterfall, which was rushing down near them from a lofty crag; and with a splash, which almost sounded like a burst of laughter, it poured over them and wet them through to the skin.

The priest, as if suddenly awaking, exclaimed: "I have long been expecting that, for the stream ran down from the height so close to us. At first it really seemed to me

like a man, and as if it could speak." As the waterfall came rushing down, it distinctly uttered these words in Huldbrand's ear:

"Rash knight,
Brave knight,
Rage, feel I not,
Chide, will I not.

But ever guard thy little wife as well,
Rash knight, brave knight! Protect her well!"

A few footsteps more, and they were upon open ground. The imperial city lay bright before them, and the evening sun, which gilded its towers, kindly dried the garments of the drenched wanderers.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THEY LIVED IN THE CITY.

THE sudden disappearance of the young knight, Huldbrand von Ringstetten, from the imperial city, had caused great sensation and solicitude among those who had admired him, both for his skill in the tournament and the dance, and no less so for his gentle and agreeable manners. His servants would not quit the place without their master, although not one of them would have had the courage to go in quest of him into the shadowy recesses of the forest. They therefore remained in their quarters, inactively hoping, as men are wont to do, and keeping alive the remembrance of their lost lord by their lamentations. When, soon after, the violent storms and floods were observed, the less doubt was entertained as to the certain destruction of the handsome stranger; and Bertalda openly mourned for him and blamed herself for having allured the unfortunate knight into the forest. Her foster-parents, the duke and duchess, had come to fetch

her away, but Bertalda entreated them to remain with her until certain intelligence had been obtained of Huldbrand's fate. She endeavored to prevail upon several young knights, who were eagerly courting her, to follow the noble adventurer to the forest. But she would not pledge her hand as a reward of the enterprise, because she always cherished the hope of belonging to the returning knight, and no glove, nor riband, nor even kiss, would tempt any one to expose his life for the sake of bringing back such a dangerous rival.

When Huldbrand now suddenly and unexpectedly appeared, his servants, and the inhabitants of the city, and almost every one, rejoiced. Bertalda alone refused to do so; for agreeable as it was to the others that he should bring with him such a beautiful bride, and Father Heilmann as a witness of the marriage, Bertalda could feel nothing but grief and vexation. In the first place, she had really loved the young knight with all her heart, and in the next, her sorrow at his absence had proclaimed this far more before the eyes of all, than was now befitting. She still, however, conducted herself as a wise maiden, reconciled herself to circumstances, and lived on the most friendly terms with Undine, who was looked upon throughout the city as a princess whom Huldbrand had rescued in the forest from some evil enchantment. When she or her husband were questioned on the matter, they were wise enough to be silent or skillfully to evade the inquiries. Father Heilmann's lips were sealed to idle gossip of any kind, and moreover, immediately after Huldbrand's arrival, he had returned to his monastery; so that people were obliged to be satisfied with their own strange conjectures, and even Bertalda herself knew no more of the truth than others.

Day by day, Undine felt her affection increase for the fair maiden. "We must have known each other before,"

she often used to say to her, "or else, there must be some mysterious connection between us, for one does not love another as dearly as I have loved you from the first moment of our meeting, without some cause—some deep and secret cause." And Bertalda also could not deny the fact that she felt drawn to Undine with a tender feeling of confidence, however much she might consider that she had cause for the bitterest lamentation at this successful rival. Biased by this mutual affection, they both persuaded—the one her foster-parents, the other her husband—to postpone the day of departure from time to time; indeed, it was even proposed that Bertalda should accompany Undine for a time to castle Ringstetten, near the source of the Danube.

They were talking over this plan one beautiful evening, as they were walking by starlight in the large square of the Imperial city, under the tall trees that inclose it. The young married pair had invited Bertalda to join them in their evening walk, and all three were strolling up and down under the dark-blue sky, often interrupting their familiar talk to admire the magnificent fountain in the middle of the square, as its waters rushed and bubbled forth with wonderful beauty. It had a soothing happy influence upon them; between the shadows of the trees there stole glimmerings of light from the adjacent houses; a low murmur of children at play, and of others enjoying their walk, floated around them; they were so alone, and yet in the midst of the bright and living world; whatever had appeared difficult by day, now became smooth as of itself; and the three friends could no longer understand why the slightest hesitation had existed with regard to Bertalda's visit to Ringstetten. Presently, just as they were on the point of fixing the day for their common departure, a tall man approached them from the middle of the square, bowed respectfully to the company, and said

something in the ear of the young wife. Displeased as she was at the interruption and its cause, she stepped a little aside with the stranger, and both began to whisper together, as it seemed, in a foreign tongue. Huldbrand fancied he knew the strange man, and he stared so fixedly at him that he neither heard nor answered Bertalda's astonished inquiries.

All at once Undine, clapping her hands joyfully, and laughing, quitted the stranger's side, who, shaking his head, retired hastily and discontentedly, and vanished in the fountain. Huldbrand now felt certain on the point, but Bertalda asked: "And what did the master of the fountain want with you, dear Undine?"

The young wife laughed within herself, and replied: "The day after to-morrow, my dear child, on the anniversary of your name-day, you shall know it." And nothing more would she disclose. She invited Bertalda and sent an invitation to her foster-parents, to dine with them on the appointed day, and soon after they parted.

"Kühleborn? was it Kühleborn?" said Huldbrand, with a secret shudder, to his beautiful bride, when they had taken leave of Bertalda, and were now going home through the darkening streets.

"Yes, it was he," replied Undine; "and he was going to say all sorts of nonsensical things to me. But, in the midst, quite contrary to his intention, he delighted me with a most welcome piece of news. If you wish to hear it at once, my dear lord and husband, you have but to command, and I will tell it you without reserve. But if you would confer a real pleasure on your Undine, you will wait till the day after to-morrow, and you will then have your share too in the surprise."

The knight gladly complied with his wife's desire, which had been urged so sweetly, and as she fell asleep, she murmured smilingly to herself: "Dear, dear Bertalda!

How she will rejoice and be astonished at what her master of the fountain told me!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANNIVERSARY OF BERTALDA'S NAME-DAY.

THE company were sitting at dinner; Bertalda, looking like some goddess of spring with her flowers and jewels, the presents of her foster-parents and friends, was placed between Undine and Huldbrand. When the rich repast was ended, and the last course had appeared, the doors were left open, according to a good old German custom, that the common people might look on, and take part in the festivity of the nobles. Servants were carrying round cake and wine among the spectators. Huldbrand and Bertalda were waiting with secret impatience for the promised explanation, and sat with their eyes fixed steadily on Undine. But the beautiful wife still continued silent, and only kept smiling to herself with secret and hearty satisfaction. All who knew of the promise she had given, could see that she was every moment on the point of betraying her happy secret, and that it was with a sort of longing renunciation that she withheld it, just as children sometimes delay the enjoyment of their choicest morsels. Bertalda and Huldbrand shared this delightful feeling, and expected with fearful hope the tidings which were to fall from the lips of Undine. Several of the company pressed Undine to sing. The request seemed opportune, and ordering her lute to be brought, she sang the following words:

Bright opening day,
Wild flowers so gay,
Tall grasses their thirst that slake,
On the banks of the billowy lake!

What glimmers there so shining
The reedy growth entwining?
Is it a blossom white as snow
Fallen from heav'n here below?

It is an infant, frail and dear!
With flowerets playing in its dreams
And grasping morning's golden beams;
Oh! whence, sweet stranger, art thou here?
From some far-off and unknown strand,
The lake has borne thee to this land.

Nay, grasp not tender little one,
With thy tiny hand outspread;
No hand will meet thy touch with love,
Mute is that flowery bed.

The flowers can deck themselves so fair
And breathe forth fragrance blest,
Yet none can press thee to itself,
Like that far-off mother's breast.

So early at the gate of life,
With smiles of heav'n on thy brow,
Thou hast the best of treasures lost,
Poor wand'ring child, nor know'st it now.

A noble duke comes riding by,
And near thee checks his courser's speed,
And full of ardent chivalry
He bears thee home upon his steed.

Much, endless much, has been thy gain!
Thou bloom'st the fairest in the land!
Yet ah! the priceless joy of all,
Thou'st left upon an unknown strand.

Undine dropped her lute with a melancholy smile, and the eyes of Bertalda's foster-parents were filled with tears. "Yes, so it was on the morning that I found you, my poor sweet orphan," said the duke, deeply agitated; "the beau-

tiful singer is certainly right; we have not been able to give you that 'priceless joy of all.'"

"But we must also hear how it fared with the poor parents," said Undine, as she resumed her lute, and sang:

Thro' every chamber roams the mother,
Moves and searches everywhere,
Seeks, she scarce knows what, with sadness,
And finds an empty house is there.

An empty house! Oh, word of sorrow,
To her who once had been so blest,
Who led her child about by day
And cradled it at night to rest.

The beech 's growing green again,
The sunshine gilds its wonted spot,
But mother, cease thy searching vain!
Thy little loved one cometh not.

And when the breath of eve blows cool,
And father in his home appears,
The smile he almost tries to wear
Is quenched at once by gushing tears.

Full well he knows that in his home
He naught can find but wild despair,
He hears the mother's grieved lament
And no bright infant greets him there.

"Oh! for God's sake, Undine, where are my parents?" cried the weeping Bertalda; "you surely know; you have discovered them, you wonderful being, for otherwise you would not have thus torn my heart. Are they perhaps already here? Can it be?" Her eye passed quickly over the brilliant company and lingered on a lady of high rank who was sitting next her foster-father. Undine, however, turned toward the door, while her eyes overflowed with the sweetest emotion. "Where are the poor waiting parents?" she inquired, and the old fisherman and his wife advanced

hesitatingly from the crowd of spectators. Their glance rested inquiringly now on Undine, now on the beautiful girl who was said to be their daughter. "It is she," said the delighted benefactress, in a faltering tone, and the two old people hung round the neck of their recovered child, weeping and praising God.

But amazed and indignant, Bertalda tore herself from their embrace. Such a recognition was too much for this proud mind, at a moment when she had surely imagined that her former splendor would even be increased, and when hope was deluding her with a vision of almost royal honors. It seemed to her as if her rival had devised all this on purpose signally to humble her before Huidbrand and the whole world. She reviled Undine, she reviled the old people, and bitter invectives, such as "deceiver" and "bribed impostors," fell from her lips. Then the old fisherman's wife said in a low voice to herself: "Ah me, she is become a wicked girl; and yet I feel in my heart that she is my child."

The old fisherman, however, had folded his hands, and was praying silently that this might not be his daughter. Undine, pale as death, turned with agitation from the parents to Bertalda, and from Bertalda to the parents; suddenly cast down from that heaven of happiness of which she had dreamed, and overwhelmed with a fear and a terror such as she had never known even in imagination. "Have you a soul? Have you really a soul, Bertalda?" she cried again and again to her angry friend, as if forcibly to rouse her to consciousness from some sudden delirium or maddening nightmare. But when Bertalda only became more and more enraged, when the repulsed parents began to weep aloud, and the company, in eager dispute, were taking different sides, she begged in such a dignified and serious manner to be allowed to speak in this her husband's hall, that all around were in a moment silenced.

She then advanced to the upper end of the table, where Bertalda had seated herself, and with a modest and yet proud air, while every eye was fixed upon her, she spoke as follows:

“My friends, you look so angry and disturbed, and you have interrupted my happy feast by your disputings. Ah! I knew nothing of your foolish habits and your heartless mode of thinking, and I shall never all my life long become accustomed to them. It is not my fault that this affair has resulted in evil; believe me, the fault is with yourselves alone, little as it may appear to you to be so. I have therefore but little to say to you, but one thing I must say: I have spoken nothing but truth. I neither can nor will give you proofs beyond my own assertion, but I will swear to the truth of this. I received this information from the very person who allured Bertalda into the water, away from her parents, and who afterward placed her on the green meadow in the duke’s path.”

“She is an enchantress!” cried Bertalda, “a witch, who has intercourse with evil spirits. She acknowledges it herself.”

“I do not,” said Undine, with a whole heaven of innocence and confidence beaming in her eyes. “I am no witch; only look at me!”

“She is false and boastful,” interrupted Bertalda, “and she cannot prove that I am the child of these low people. My noble parents, I beg you to take me from this company and out of this city, where they are only bent on insulting me.”

But the aged and honorable duke remained unmoved, and his wife said: “We must thoroughly examine how we are to act. God forbid that we should move a step from this hall until we have done so.”

Then the old wife of the fisherman drew near, and making a low reverence to the duchess, she said: “Noble,

god-fearing lady, you have opened my heart. I must tell you, if this evil-disposed young lady is my daughter, she has a mark, like a violet, between her shoulders, and another like it on the instep of her left foot. If she would only go out of the hall with me!"

"I shall not uncover myself before the peasant woman?" exclaimed Bertalda, proudly turning her back on her.

"But before me you will," rejoined the duchess, very gravely. "Follow me into that room, girl, and the good old woman shall come with us." The three disappeared, and the rest of the company remained where they were, in silent expectation. After a short time they returned; Bertalda was pale as death. "Right is right," said the duchess; "I must therefore declare that our hostess has spoken perfect truth. Bertalda is the fisherman's daughter, and that is as much as it is necessary to inform you here."

The princely pair left with their adopted daughter; and at a sign from the duke, the fisherman and his wife followed them. The other guests retired in silence or with secret murmurs, and Undine sank weeping into Huldbrand's arms.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THEY DEPARTED FROM THE IMPERIAL CITY.

THE lord of Ringstetten would have certainly preferred the events of this day to have been different; but even as they were, he could scarcely regret them wholly, as they had exhibited his charming wife under such a good and sweet and kindly aspect. "If I have given her a soul," he could not help saying to himself, "I have indeed given her a better one than my own;" and his only thought now was to speak soothingly to the weeping Undine, and on the

following morning to quit with her a place which, after this incident, must have become distasteful to her. It is true that she was not estimated differently to what she had been. As something mysterious had long been expected of her, the strange discovery of Bertalda's origin had caused no great surprise, and every one who had heard the story and had seen Bertalda's violent behavior, was disgusted with her alone. Of this, however, the knight and his lady knew nothing as yet; and, besides, the condemnation or approval of the public was equally painful to Undine, and thus there was no better course to pursue than to leave the walls of the old city behind them with all the speed possible.

With the earliest beams of morning a pretty carriage drove up to the entrance gate for Undine; the horses which Huldbrand and his squires were to ride stood near, pawing the ground with impatient eagerness. The knight was leading his beautiful wife from the door, when a fisher-girl crossed their way. We do not need your fish," said Huldbrand to her, "we are now starting on our journey." Upon this the fisher-girl began to weep bitterly, and the young couple perceived for the first time that it was Bertalda. They immediately returned with her to their apartment, and learned from her that the duke and duchess were so displeased at her violent and unfeeling conduct on the preceding day, that they had entirely withdrawn their protection from her, though not without giving her a rich portion.

The fisherman, too, had been handsomely rewarded, and had the evening before set out with his wife to return to their secluded home.

"I would have gone with them," she continued, "but the old fisherman, who is said to be my father——"

"And he is so indeed, Bertalda," interrupted Undine. "Look here, the stranger, whom you took for the master

of the fountain, told me the whole story in detail. He wished to dissuade me from taking you with me to castle Ringstetten, and this led him to disclose the secret."

"Well then," said Bertalda, "if it must be so, my father said, 'I will not take you with me until you are changed. Venture to come to us alone through the haunted forest; that shall be the proof whether you have any regard for us. But do not come to me as a lady; come only as a fisher-girl!' So I will do just as he has told me, for I am forsaken by the whole world, and I will live and die in solitude as a poor fisher-girl, with my poor parents. I have a terrible dread though of the forest. Horrible specters are said to dwell in it, and I am so fearful. But how can I help it? I only came here to implore pardon of the noble lady of Ringstetten for my unbecoming behavior yesterday. I feel sure, sweet lady, you meant to do me a kindness, but you knew not how you would wound me, and in my agony and surprise, many a rash and frantic expression passed my lips. Oh forgive, forgive! I am already so unhappy. Only think yourself what I was yesterday morning, yesterday at the beginning of your banquet, and what I am now!"

Her voice became stifled with a passionate flood of tears, and Undine, also weeping bitterly, fell on her neck. It was some time before the deeply agitated Undine could utter a word; at length she said:

"You can go with us to Ringstetten; everything shall remain as it was arranged before; only do not speak to me again as 'noble lady.' You see, we were exchanged for each other as children; our faces even then sprang as it were from the same stem, and we will now so strengthen this kindred destiny that no human power shall be able to separate it. Only, first of all, come with us to Ringstetten. We will discuss there how we shall share all things as sisters."

Bertalda looked timidly toward Huldbrand. He pitied the beautiful girl in her distress, and offering her his hand he begged her tenderly to entrust herself with him and his wife. "We will send a message to your parents," he continued, "to tell them why you are not come;" and he would have added more with regard to the worthy fisherman and his wife, but he saw that Bertalda shrunk with pain from the mention of their name, and he therefore refrained from saying more.

He then assisted her first into the carriage, Undine followed her; and he mounted his horse and trotted merrily by the side of them, urging the driver at the same time to hasten his speed, so that very soon they were beyond the confines of the imperial city and all its sad remembrances; and now the ladies began to enjoy the beautiful country through which their road lay.

After a journey of some days, they arrived one exquisite evening, at castle Ringstetten. The young knight had much to hear from his overseers and vassals, so that Undine and Bertalda were left alone.

They both repaired to the ramparts of the fortress, and were delighted with the beautiful landscape which spread far and wide through fertile Swabia.

Presently a tall man approached them, greeting them respectfully, and Bertalda fancied she saw a resemblance to the master of the fountain in the imperial city. Still more unmistakable grew the likeness, when Undine angrily and almost threateningly waved him off, and he retreated with hasty steps and shaking head, as he had done before, and disappeared into a neighboring copse. Undine, however, said: "Don't be afraid, dear Bertalda, this time the hateful master of the fountain shall do you no harm." And then she told her the whole story in detail, and who she was herself, and how Bertalda had been taken away from the fisherman and his wife, and

Undine had gone to them. The girl was at first terrified with this relation; she imagined her friend must be seized with sudden madness, but she became more convinced that all was true, for Undine's story was so connected, and fitted so well with former occurrences, and still more she had that inward feeling with which truth never fails to make itself known to us. It seemed strange to her that she was now herself living, as it were, in the midst of one of those fairy tales to which she had formerly only listened.

She gazed upon Undine with reverence, but she could not resist a sense of dread that seemed to come between her and her friend, and at their evening repast she could not but wonder how the knight could behave so lovingly and kindly toward a being who appeared to her, since the discovery she had just made, more of a phantom than a human being.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THEY LIVED AT CASTLE RINGSTETTEN.

THE writer of this story, both because it moves his own heart, and because he wishes it to move that of others, begs you, dear reader, to pardon him, if he now briefly passes over a considerable space of time, only cursorily mentioning the events that marked it. He knows well that he might portray skillfully, step by step, how Huldbrand's heart began to turn from Undine to Bertalda; how Bertalda more and more responded with ardent affection to the young knight, and how they both looked upon the poor wife as a mysterious being rather to be feared than pitied; how Undine wept, and how her tears stung the knight's heart with remorse without awakening his former love, so that though he at times was kind and

endearing to her, a cold shudder would soon draw him from her, and he would turn to his fellow-mortal, Bertalda. All this the writer knows might be fully detailed, and perhaps ought to have been so; but such a task would have been too painful, for similar things have been known to him by sad experience, and he shrinks from their shadow even in remembrance. You know probably a like feeling, dear reader, for such is the lot of mortal man. Happy are you if you have received rather than inflicted the pain, for in such things it is more blessed to receive than to give. If it be so, such recollections will only bring a feeling of sorrow to your mind, and perhaps a tear will trickle down your cheek over the faded flowers that once caused you such delight. But let that be enough. We will not pierce our hearts with a thousand separate things, but only briefly state, as I have just said, how matters were.

Poor Undine was very sad, and the other two were not to be called happy. Bertalda especially thought that she could trace the effect of jealousy on the part of the injured wife whenever her wishes were in any way thwarted by her. She had therefore habituated herself to an imperious demeanor, to which Undine yielded in sorrowful submission, and the now blinded Huldbrand usually encouraged this arrogant behavior in the strongest manner. But the circumstance that most of all disturbed the inmates of the castle, was a variety of wonderful apparitions which met Huldbrand and Bertalda in the vaulted galleries of the castle, and which had never been heard of before as haunting the locality. The tall white man, in whom Huldbrand recognized only too plainly Uncle Kühleborn, and Bertalda the spectral master of the fountain, often passed before them with a threatening aspect, and especially before Bertalda; so much so, that she had already several times been made ill with

terror, and had frequently thought of quitting the castle. But still she stayed there, partly because Huldbrand was so dear to her, and she relied on her innocence, no words of love having ever passed between them, and partly also because she knew not whither to direct her steps. The old fisherman, on receiving the message from the lord of Ringstetten that Bertalda was his guest, had written a few lines in an almost illegible hand, but as good as his advanced age and long disuse would admit of.

“I have now become,” he wrote, “a poor old widower, for my dear and faithful wife is dead. However lonely I now sit in my cottage, Bertalda is better with you than with me. Only let her do nothing to harm my beloved Undine! She will have my curse if it be so.” The last words of this letter, Bertalda flung to the winds, but she carefully retained the part respecting her absence from her father — just as we are all wont to do in similar circumstances.

One day, when Huldbrand had just ridden out, Undine summoned together the domestics of the family, and ordered them to bring a large stone, and carefully to cover with it the magnificent fountain which stood in the middle of the castle-yard. The servants objected that it would oblige them to bring water from the valley below. Undine smiled sadly. “I am sorry, my people,” she replied, “to increase your work. I would rather myself fetch up the pitchers, but this fountain must be closed. Believe me that it cannot be otherwise, and that it is only by so doing that we can avoid a greater evil.”

The whole household were glad to be able to please their gentle mistress; they made no further inquiry, but seized the enormous stone. They were just raising it in their hands, and were already poising it over the fountain, when Bertalda came running up, and called out to them to stop, as it was from this fountain that the water

was brought which was so good for her complexion, and she would never consent to its being closed. Undine, however, although gentle as usual, was more than usually firm. She told Bertalda that it was her due, as mistress of the house, to arrange her household as she thought best, and that, in this, she was accountable to no one but her lord and husband. "See, oh, pray see," exclaimed Bertalda, in an angry, yet uneasy tone, "how the poor beautiful water is curling and writhing at being shut out from the bright sunshine and from the cheerful sight of the human face, for whose mirror it was created!"

The water in the fountain was indeed wonderfully agitated and hissing; it seemed as if something within were struggling to free itself, but Undine only the more earnestly urged the fulfillment of her orders. The earnestness was scarcely needed. The servants of the castle were as happy in obeying their gentle mistress as in opposing Bertalda's haughty defiance; and in spite of all the rude scolding and threatening of the latter the stone was soon firmly lying over the opening of the fountain. Undine leaned thoughtfully over it, and wrote with her beautiful fingers on its surface. She must, however, have had something very sharp and cutting in her hand, for when she turned away, and the servants drew near to examine the stone, they perceived various strange characters upon it, which none of them had seen there before.

Bertalda received the knight, on his return home in the evening, with tears and complaints of Undine's conduct. He cast a serious look at his poor wife, and she looked down as is distressed. Yet she said with great composure: "My lord and husband does not reprove even a bonds slave without a hearing, how much less, then, his wedded wife?"

"Speak," said the knight with a gloomy countenance, "what induced you to act so strangely?"

"I should like to tell you when we are quite alone," sighed Undine.

"You can tell me just as well in Bertalda's presence," was the rejoinder.

"Yes, if you command me," said Undine; "but command it not. Oh pray, pray command it not!"

She looked so humble, so sweet, and obedient, that the knight's heart felt a passing gleam from better times. He kindly placed her arm within his own, and led her to his apartment, when she began to speak as follows:

"You already know, my beloved lord, something of my evil uncle, Kühleborn, and you have frequently been displeased at meeting him in the galleries of this castle. He has several times frightened Bertalda into illness. This is because he is devoid of soul, a mere elemental mirror of the outward world, without the power of reflecting the world within. He sees, too, sometimes, that you are dissatisfied with me; that I, in my childishness, am weeping at this, and that Bertalda perhaps is at the very same moment laughing. Hence he imagines various discrepancies in our home life, and in many ways mixes unbidden with our circle. What is the good of reproving him? What is the use of sending him angrily away? He does not believe a word I say. His poor nature has no idea that the joys and sorrows of love have so sweet a resemblance, and are so closely linked that no power can separate them. Amid tears a smile shines forth, and a smile allures tears from their secret chambers."

She looked up at Huldbrand, smiling and weeping; and he again experienced within his heart all the charm of his old love. She felt this, and pressing him more tenderly to her, she continued amid tears of joy:

"As the disturber of our peace was not to be dismissed with words, I have been obliged to shut the door upon him. And the only door by which he obtains access to us

is that fountain. He is cut off by the adjacent valleys from the other water-spirits in the neighborhood, and his kingdom only commences further off on the Danube, into which some of his good friends direct their course. For this reason I had the stone placed over the opening of the fountain, and I inscribed characters upon it which cripple all my uncle's power, so that he can now neither intrude upon you, nor upon me, nor upon Bertalda. Human beings, it is true, can raise the stone again with ordinary effort, in spite of the characters inscribed on it. The inscription does not hinder them. If you wish, therefore, follow Bertalda's desire, but, truly! she knows not what she asks. The rude Kühleborn has set his mark especially upon her; and if much came to pass which he has predicted to me, and which might, indeed, happen without your meaning any evil, ah! dear one, even you would then be exposed to danger!"

Huldrand felt deeply the generosity of his sweet wife, in her eagerness to shut up her formidable protector, while she had even been chided for it by Bertalda. He pressed her in his arms with the utmost affection, and said with emotion: "The stone shall remain, and all shall remain, now and ever, as you wish to have it, my sweet Undine."

She caressed him with humble delight, as she heard the expressions of love so long withheld, and then at length she said: "My dearest husband, you are so gentle and kind to-day, may I venture to ask a favor of you? See now, it is just the same with you as it is with summer. In the height of its glory, summer puts on the flaming and thundering crown of mighty storms, and assumes the air of a king over the earth. You, too, sometimes, let your fury rise, and your eyes flash and your voice is angry, and this becomes you well, though I, in my folly, may sometimes weep at it. But never, I pray you, behave thus

toward me on the water, or even when we are near it. You see, my relatives would then acquire a right over me. They would unrelentingly tear me from you in their rage; because they would imagine that one of their race was injured, and I should be compelled all my life to dwell below in the crystal palaces, and should never dare to ascend to you again; or they would send me up to you—and that, oh God, would be infinitely worse. No, no, my beloved husband, do not let it come to that, if your poor Undine is dear to you.”

He promised solemnly to do as she desired, and they both returned from the apartment, full of happiness and affection. At that moment Bertalda appeared with some workmen, to whom she had already given orders, and said in a sullen tone, which she had assumed of late: “I suppose the secret conference is at an end, and now the stone may be removed. Go out, workmen, and attend to it.”

But the knight, angry at her impertinence, desired in short and very decisive words that the stone should be left; he reproved Bertalda, too, for her violence toward his wife. Whereupon the workmen withdrew, smiling with secret satisfaction; while Bertalda, pale with rage, hurried away to her room.

The hour for the evening repast arrived, and Bertalda was waited for in vain. They sent after her, but the domestic found her apartments empty, and only brought back with him a sealed letter addressed to the knight. He opened it with alarm, and read: “I feel with shame that I am only a poor fisher-girl. I will expiate my fault in having forgotten this for a moment by going to the miserable cottage of my parents. Farewell to you and your beautiful wife.”

Undine was heartily distressed. She earnestly entreated Huldbrand to hasten after their friend and bring her back

again. Alas! she had no need to urge him. His affection for Bertalda burst forth again with vehemence. He hurried round the castle, inquiring if any one had seen which way the fugitive had gone. He could learn nothing of her, and he was already on his horse in the castle-yard, resolved at a venture to take the road by which he had brought Bertalda hither. Just then a page appeared, who assured him that he had met the lady on the path to the Black Valley. Like an arrow the knight sprang through the gateway in the direction indicated, without hearing Undine's voice of agony, as she called to him from the window:

"To the Black Valley! Oh, not there! Huldbrand, don't go there! or, for heaven's sake, take me with you!" But when she perceived that all her calling was in vain, she ordered her white palfrey to be immediately saddled, and rode after the knight, without allowing any servant to accompany her.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW BERTALDA RETURNED HOME WITH THE KNIGHT.

THE Black Valley lies deep within the mountains. What it is now called we do not know. At that time the people of the country gave it this appellation on account of the deep obscurity in which the low land lay, owing to the shadows of the lofty trees, and especially firs, that grew there. Even the brook which bubbled between the rocks wore the same dark hue, and dashed along with none of that gladness with which streams are wont to flow that have the blue sky immediately above them. Now, in the growing twilight of evening, it looked wild and gloomy between the heights. The knight trotted anxiously along the edge of the brook,

fearful at one moment that by delay he might allow the fugitive to advance too far, and at the next that by too great rapidity he might overlook her in case she were concealing herself from him. Meanwhile he had already penetrated tolerably far into the valley, and might soon hope to overtake the maiden, if he were on the right track. The fear that this might not be the case made his heart beat with anxiety. Where would the tender Bertalda tarry through the stormy night, which was so fearful in the valley, should he fail to find her? At length he saw something white gleaming through the branches on the slope of the mountain. He thought he recognized Bertalda's dress, and he turned his course in that direction. But his horse refused to go forward; it reared impatiently; and its master, unwilling to lose a moment, and seeing moreover that the copse was impassable on horse-back, dismounted; and, fastening his snorting steed to an elm-tree, he worked his way cautiously through the bushes. The branches sprinkled his forehead and cheeks with the cold drops of the evening dew; a distant roll of thunder was heard murmuring from the other side of the mountains; everything looked so strange that he began to feel a dread of the white figure, which now lay only a short distance from him on the ground. Still he could plainly see that it was a female, either asleep or in a swoon, and that she was attired in long white garments, such as Bertalda had worn on that day. He stepped close up to her, made a rustling with the branches, and let his sword clatter, but she moved not. "Bertalda!" he exclaimed, at first in a low voice, and then louder and louder—still she heard not. At last, when he uttered the dear name with a more powerful effort, a hollow echo from the mountain-caverns of the valley indistinctly reverberated "Bertalda!" but still the sleeper woke not. He bent down over her; the gloom of the valley and the obscurity of approaching night would not allow him to distinguish her features.

Just as he was stooping closer over her, with a feeling of painful doubt, a flash of lightning shot across the valley, and he saw before him a frightfully distorted countenance, and a hollow voice exclaimed: "Give me a kiss, you enamored swain!"

Huldbrand sprang up with a cry of horror, and the hideous figure rose with him. "Go home!" it murmured; "wizards are on the watch. Go home! or I will have you!" and it stretched out its long white arms toward him.

"Malicious Kühleborn!" cried the knight, recovering himself, "What do you concern me, you goblin? There, take your kiss!" And he furiously hurled his sword at the figure. But it vanished like vapor, and a gush of water which wetted him through left the knight no doubt as to the foe with whom he had been engaged.

"He wishes to frighten me back from Bertalda," said he aloud to himself; "he thinks to terrify me with his foolish tricks, and to make me give up the poor distressed girl to him, so that he can wreak his vengeance on her. But he shall not do that, weak spirit of the elements, as he is. No powerless phantom can understand what a human heart can do when its best energies are aroused." He felt the truth of his words, and that the very expression of them had inspired his heart with fresh courage. It seemed too as if fortune were on his side, for he had not reached his fastened horse, when he distinctly heard Bertalda's plaintive voice not far distant, and could catch her weeping accents through the ever increasing tumult of the thunder and tempest. He hurried swiftly in the direction of the sound, and found the trembling girl just attempting to climb the steep, in order to escape in any way from the dreadful gloom of the valley. He stepped, however, lovingly in her path, and bold and proud as her resolve had before been, she now felt only too keenly the delight, that the friend whom she so passionately loved should rescue her from this

frightful solitude, and that the joyous life in the castle should be again open to her. She followed almost unre-sisting, but so exhausted with fatigue that the knight was glad to have brought her to his horse, which he now hastily unfastened, in order to lift the fair fugitive upon it; and then, cautiously holding the reins, he hoped to proceed through the uncertain shades of the valley.

But the horse had become quite unmanageable from the wild apparition of Kühleborn. Even the knight would have had difficulty in mounting the rearing and snorting animal, but to place the trembling Bertalda on its back was perfectly impossible. They determined, therefore, to return home on foot. Drawing the horse after him by the bridle, the knight supported the tottering girl with his other hand. Bertalda exerted all her strength to pass quickly through the fearful valley, but weariness weighed her down like lead, and every limb trembled, partly from the terror she had endured when Kühleborn had pursued her, and partly from her continued alarm at the howling of the storm and the pealing of the thunder through the wooded mountain.

At last she slid from the supporting arm of her protector, and sinking down on the moss, she exclaimed: "Let me lie here my noble lord; I suffer the punishment due to my folly, and I must now perish here through weariness and dread."

"No, sweet friend, I will never leave you!" cried Huldbrand, vainly endeavoring to restrain his furious steed; for, worse than before, it now began to foam and rear with excitement, until at last the knight was glad to keep the animal at a sufficient distance from the exhausted maiden, lest her fears should be increased. But scarcely had he withdrawn a few paces with the wild steed, than she began to call after him in the most pitiful manner, believing that he was really going to leave her in this horrible wilderness. He

was utterly at a loss what course to take. Gladly would he have given the excited beast its liberty and have allowed it to rush away into the night and spend its fury, had he not feared that in this narrow defile it might come thundering with its iron-shod hoofs over the very spot where Bertalda lay.

In the midst of this extreme perplexity and distress, he heard with delight the sound of a vehicle driving slowly down the stony road behind them. He called out for help; and a man's voice replied, bidding him have patience, but promising assistance; and soon after, two gray horses appeared through the bushes, and beside them the driver in the white smock of a carter; a great white linen cloth was next visible, covering the goods apparently contained in the wagon. At a loud shout from their master, the obedient horses halted. The driver then came toward the knight, and helped him in restraining his foaming animal.

"I see well," said he "what ails the beast. When I first traveled this way, my horses were no better. The fact is, there is an evil water-spirit haunting the place, and he takes delight in this sort of mischief. But I have learned a charm; if you will let me whisper it in your horse's ear, he will stand at once just as quiet as my gray beasts are doing there."

"Try your luck then, only help us quickly!" exclaimed the impatient knight. The wagoner then drew down the head of the rearing charger close to his own, and whispered something in his ear. In a moment the animal stood still and quiet, and his quick panting and reeking condition was all that remained of his previous unmanageableness. Huldbrand had no time to inquire how all this had been effected. He agreed with the carter that he should take Bertalda on his wagon, where, as the man assured him, there were a quantity of soft cotton-bales, upon which she could be conveyed to castle Ringstetten, and the knight was

to accompany them on horseback. But the horse appeared too much exhausted by its past fury to be able to carry its master so far, so the carter persuaded Huldbrand to get into the wagon with Bertalda. The horse could be fastened on behind. "We are going down hill," said he, "and that will make it light for my gray beasts."

The knight accepted the offer and entered the wagon with Bertalda; the horse followed patiently behind, and the wagoner, steady and attentive, walked by the side.

In the stillness of the night, as its darkness deepened and the subsiding tempest sounded more and more remote, encouraged by the sense of security and their fortunate escape, a confidential conversation arose between Huldbrand and Bertalda. With flattering words he reproached her for her daring flight; she excused herself with humility and emotion, and from every word she said a gleam shone forth which disclosed distinctly to the lover that the beloved was his. The knight felt the sense of her words far more than he regarded their meaning, and it was the sense alone to which he replied. Presently the wagoner suddenly shouted with a loud voice:

"Up, my grays, up with your feet, keep together! remember who you are!"

The knight leaned out of the wagon and saw that the horses were stepping into the midst of a foaming stream or were already almost swimming, while the wheels of the wagon were rushing round and gleaming like mill-wheels, and the wagoner had got up in front, in consequence of the increasing waters.

"What sort of a road is this? It goes into the middle of the stream," cried Huldbrand to his guide.

"Not at all, sir," returned the other, laughing, "it is just the reverse, the stream goes into the very middle of our road. Look round and see how everything is covered by the water."

The whole valley indeed was suddenly filled with the surging flood, that visibly increased. "It is Kühleborn, the evil water-spirit, who wishes to drown us!" exclaimed the knight. "Have you no charm against him, my friend?"

"I know indeed of one," returned the wagoner, "but I cannot and may not use it until you know who I am."

"Is this a time for riddles?" cried the knight. "The flood is ever rising higher, and what does it matter to me to know who you are?"

"It does matter to you, though," said the wagoner, "for I am Kühleborn."

So saying, he thrust his distorted face into the wagon with a grin, but the wagon was a wagon no longer, the horses were not horses—all was transformed to foam and vanished in the hissing waves, and even the wagoner himself, rising as a gigantic billow, drew down the vainly struggling horse beneath the waters, and then swelling higher and higher, swept over the heads of the floating pair, like some liquid tower, threatening to bury them irrecoverably.

Just then the soft voice of Undine sounded through the uproar, the moon emerged from the clouds, and by its light Undine was seen on the heights above the valley. She rebuked, she threatened the floods below; the menacing, tower-like wave vanished, muttering and murmuring, the waters flowed gently away in the moonlight, and like a white dove, Undine flew down from the height, seized the knight and Bertalda, and bore them with her to a fresh, green, turfy spot on the hill, where with choice refreshing restoratives, she dispelled their terrors and weariness; then she assisted Bertalda to mount the white palfrey, on which she had herself ridden here, and thus all three returned back to castle Ringstetten.

CHAPTER XV.

THE JOURNEY TO VIENNA.

AFTER this last adventure, they lived quietly and happily at the castle. The knight more and more perceived the heavenly goodness of his wife, which had been so nobly exhibited by her pursuit, and by her rescue of them in the Black Valley, where Kühleborn's power again commenced; Undine herself felt that peace and security, which is never lacking to a mind so long as it is distinctly conscious of being on the right path, and besides, in the newly awakened love and esteem of her husband, many a gleam of hope and joy shone upon her. Bertalda, on the other hand, showed herself grateful, humble and timid, without regarding her conduct as anything meritorious. Whenever Huldbrand or Undine were about to give her any explanation regarding the covering of the fountain or the adventure in the Black Valley, she would earnestly entreat them to spare her the recital, as she felt too much shame at the recollection of the fountain, and too much fear at the remembrance of the Black Valley. She learned therefore nothing further of either; and for what end was such knowledge necessary? Peace and joy had visibly taken up their abode at castle Ringstetten. They felt secure on this point, and imagined that life could now produce nothing but pleasant flowers and fruits.

In this happy condition of things, winter had come and passed away, and spring with its fresh green shoots and its blue sky, was gladdening the joyous inmates of the castle. Spring was in harmony with them, and they with spring. What wonder then, that its storks and swallows inspired them also with a desire to travel? One day when they were taking a pleasant walk to one of the sources of the Danube, Huldbrand spoke of the magnificence of the

noble river, and how it widened as it flowed through countries fertilized by its waters, how the charming city of Vienna shone forth on its banks, and how with every step of its course it increased in power and loveliness.

"It must be glorious to go down the river as far as Vienna!" exclaimed Bertalda, but immediately relapsing into her present modesty and humility, she paused and blushed deeply.

This touched Undine deeply, and with the liveliest desire to give pleasure to her friend, she said: "What hinders us from starting on the little voyage?"

Bertalda exhibited the greatest delight, and both she and Undine began at once to picture the tour of the Danube in the brightest colors. Huldbrand also gladly agreed to the prospect; only he once whispered anxiously in Undine's ear:

"But Kühleborn becomes possessed of his power again out there!"

"Let him come," she replied with a smile; "I shall be there, and he ventures upon none of his mischief before me." The last impediment was thus removed; they prepared for the journey, and soon after set out upon it with fresh spirits and the brightest hopes.

But wonder not, oh man, if events always turn out different to what we have intended. That malicious power, lurking for our destruction, gladly lulls its chosen victim to sleep with sweet songs and golden delusions; while on the other hand the rescuing messenger from Heaven often knocks sharply and alarmingly at our door.

During the first few days of their voyage down the Danube they were extremely happy. Everything grew more and more beautiful as they sailed further and further down the proudly flowing stream. But in a region, otherwise so pleasant, and in the enjoyment of which they had promised themselves the purest delight, the ungovernable

Kühleborn began, undisguisedly, to exhibit his power of interference. This was indeed manifested in mere teasing tricks, for Undine often rebuked the agitated waves, or the contrary winds, and then the violence of the enemy would be immediately humbled; but again the attacks would be renewed, and again Undine's reproofs would become necessary, so that the pleasure of the little party was completely destroyed. The boatmen too were continually whispering to each other in dismay, and looking with distrust at the three strangers, whose servants even began more and more to forebode something uncomfortable, and to watch their superiors with suspicious glances. Huldbrand often said to himself: "This comes from like not being linked with like, from a man uniting himself with a mermaid!" Excusing himself as we all love to do, he would often think indeed as he said this: "I did not really know that she was a sea-maiden, mine is the misfortune, that every step I take is disturbed and haunted by the wild caprices of her race, but mine is not the fault." By thoughts such as these, he felt himself in some measure strengthened, but on the other hand, he felt increasing ill-humor, and almost animosity toward Undine. He would look at her with an expression of anger, the meaning of which the poor wife understood well. Wearied with this exhibition of displeasure, and exhausted by the constant effort to frustrate Kühleborn's artifices, she sank one evening into a deep slumber, rocked soothingly by the softly gliding bark.

Scarcely, however, had she closed her eyes, than every one in the vessel imagined he saw, in whatever direction he turned, a most horrible human head; it rose out of the waves, not like that of a person swimming, but perfectly perpendicular as if invisibly supported upright on the watery surface, and floating along in the same course with the bark. Each wanted to point out to the other the

cause of his alarm, but each found the same expression of horror depicted on the face of his neighbor, only that his hands and eyes were directed to a different point where the monster, half-laughing and half-threatening, rose before him. When, however, they all wished to make each other understand what each saw, and all were crying out: "Look there! No, there!" the horrible heads all at one and the same time appeared to their view, and the whole river around the vessel swarmed with the most hideous apparitions. The universal cry raised at the sight awoke Undine. As she opened her eyes, the wild crowd of distorted visages disappeared. But Huldbrand was indignant at such unsightly jugglery. He would have burst forth in uncontrolled imprecations had not Undine said to him with a humble manner and a softly imploring tone: "For God's sake, my husband, we are on the water, do not be angry with me now."

The knight was silent, and sat down absorbed in reverie. Undine whispered in his ear: "Would it not be better, my love, if we gave up this foolish journey, and returned to castle Ringstetten in peace?"

But Huldbrand murmured moodily: "So I must be a prisoner in my own castle, and only be able to breathe so long as the fountain is closed! I would your mad kindred——" Undine lovingly pressed her fair hand upon his lips. He paused, pondering in silence over much that Undine had before said to him.

Bertalda had meanwhile given herself up to a variety of strange thoughts. She knew a good deal of Undine's origin, and yet not the whole, and the fearful Kühleborn especially had remained to her a terrible but wholly unrevealed mystery. She had indeed never even heard his name. Musing on these strange things, she unclasped, scarcely conscious of the act, a gold necklace, which Huldbrand had lately purchased for her of a traveling trader;

half dreamingly she drew it along the surface of the water, enjoying the light glimmer it cast upon the evening-tinted stream. Suddenly a huge hand was stretched out of the Danube, it seized the necklace and vanished with it beneath the waters. Bertalda screamed aloud, and a scornful laugh resounded from the depths of the stream. The knight could now restrain his anger no longer. Starting up, he inveighed against the river; he cursed all who ventured to interfere with his family and his life, and challenged them, be they spirits or sirens, to show themselves before his avenging sword.

Bertalda wept meanwhile for her lost ornament, which was so precious to her, and her tears added fuel to the flame of the knight's anger, while Undine held her hand over the side of the vessel, dipping it into the water, softly murmuring to herself, and only now and then interrupting her strange mysterious whisper, as she entreated her husband: "My dearly loved one, do not scold me here; reprove others if you will, but not me here. You know why!" And indeed, he restrained the words of anger that were trembling on his tongue. Presently in her wet hand which she had been holding under the waves, she brought up a beautiful coral necklace of so much brilliancy that the eyes of all were dazzled by it.

"Take this," said she, holding it out kindly to Bertalda; "I have ordered this to be brought for you as a compensation, and don't be grieved any more, my poor child."

But the knight sprang between them. He tore the beautiful ornament from Undine's hand, hurled it again into the river, exclaiming in passionate rage: "Have you then still a connection with them? In the name of all the witches, remain among them with your presents, and leaves us mortals in peace, you sorceress!"

Poor Undine gazed at him with fixed but tearful eyes, her hand still stretched out, as when she had offered her

beautiful present so lovingly to Bertalda. She then began to weep more and more violently, like a dear innocent child bitterly afflicted. At last, wearied out she said: "Alas, sweet friend, alas! farewell! They shall do you no harm; only remain true, so that I may be able to keep them from you. I must, alas! go away; I must go hence at this early stage of life. Oh woe, woe! what have you done! Oh woe, woe!"

She vanished over the side of the vessel. Whether she plunged into the stream, or flowed away with it, they knew not; her disappearance was like both and neither. Soon, however, she was completely lost sight of in the Danube; only a few little waves kept whispering, as if sobbing, round the boat, and they almost seemed to be saying: "Oh woe, woe! oh remain true! oh woe!"

Huldrand lay on the deck of the vessel, bathed in hot tears, and a deep swoon soon cast its veil of forgetfulness over the unhappy man.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW IT FARED FURTHER WITH HULDRAND.

SHALL we say it is well or ill, that our sorrow is of such short duration? I mean that deep sorrow which affects the very well-spring of our life, which becomes so one with the lost objects of our love that they are no longer lost, and which enshrines their image as a sacred treasure, until that final goal is reached which they have reached before us! It is true that many men really maintain these sacred memories, but their feeling is no longer that of the first deep grief. Other and new images have thronged between; we learn at length the transitoriness of all earthly things, even to our grief, and, therefore, I must say "Alas, that our sorrow should be of such short duration!"

The lord of Ringstetten experienced this: whether for his good, we shall hear in the sequel to this history. At first he could do nothing but weep, and that as bitterly as the poor gentle Undine had wept when he had torn from her hand that brilliant ornament with which she had wished to set everything to rights. And then he would stretch out his hand, as she had done, and would weep again, like her. He cherished the secret hope that he might at length dissolve in tears; and has not a similar hope passed before the mind of many a one of us, with painful pleasure, in moments of great affliction? Bertalda wept also, and they lived a long while quietly together at castle Ringstetten, cherishing Undine's memory, and almost wholly forgetful of their former attachment to each other. And, therefore, the good Undine often visited Huldbrand in his dreams; caressing him tenderly and kindly, and then going away, weeping silently, so that when he awoke he often scarcely knew why his cheeks were so wet: whether they had been bathed with her tears, or merely with his own?

These dream-visions became, however, less frequent as time passed on, and the grief of the knight was less acute; still he would probably have cherished no other wish than thus to think calmly of Undine and to talk of her, had not the old fisherman appeared one day unexpectedly at the castle, and sternly insisted on Bertalda's returning with him as his child. The news of Undine's disappearance had reached him, and he had determined on no longer allowing Bertalda to reside at the castle with the widowed knight.

"For," said he, "whether my daughter love me or no, I do not care to know, but her honor is at stake, and where that is concerned, nothing else is to be thought of."

This idea of the old fisherman's, and the solitude which

threatened to overwhelm the knight in all the halls and galleries of the desolate castle, after Bertalda's departure, brought out the feelings that had slumbered till now and which had been wholly forgotten in his sorrow for Undine; namely, Huldbrand's affection for the beautiful Bertalda. The fisherman had many objections to raise against the proposed marriage. Undine had been very dear to the old fisherman, and he felt that no one really knew for certain whether the dear lost one were actually dead. And if her body were truly lying cold and stiff at the bottom of the Danube, or had floated away with the current into the ocean, even then Bertalda was in some measure to blame for her death, and it was unfitting for her to step into the place of the poor supplanted one. Yet the fisherman had a strong regard for the knight also; and the entreaties of his daughter, who had become much more gentle and submissive, and her tears for Undine, turned the scale, and he must at length have given his consent, for he remained at the castle without objection, and a messenger was dispatched to Father Heilmann, who had united Undine and Huldbrand in happy days gone by, to bring him to the castle for the second nuptials of the knight.

The holy man, however, had scarcely read the letter from the knight of Ringstetten, than he set out on his journey to the castle, with far greater expedition than even the messenger had used in going to him. Whenever his breath failed in his rapid progress, or his aged limbs ached with weariness, he would say to himself: "Perhaps the evil may yet be prevented; fail not, my tottering frame, till you have reached the goal!" And with renewed power he would then press forward, and go on and on without rest or repose, until late one evening he entered the shady court-yard of castle Ringstetten.

The betrothed pair were sitting side by side under the

trees, and the old fisherman was near them, absorbed in thought. The moment they recognized Father Heilmann, they sprang up, and pressed round him with warm welcome. But he without making much reply, begged Huldbrand to go with him into the castle; and when the latter looked astonished, and hesitated to obey the grave summons, the reverend father said to him:

“Why should I make any delay in wishing to speak to you in private, Herr von Ringstetten? What I have to say concerns Bertalda and the fisherman as much as yourself, and what a man has to hear, he may prefer to hear as soon as possible. Are you then so perfectly certain, Knight Huldbrand, that your first wife is really dead? It scarcely seems so to me. I will not indeed say anything of the mysterious condition in which she may be existing, and I know, too, nothing of it with certainty. But she was a pious and faithful wife, that is beyond all doubt; and for a fortnight past she has stood at my bedside at night in my dreams, wringing her tender hands in anguish and sighing out: ‘Oh, prevent him, good father! I am still living! oh, save his life! save his soul!’ I did not understand what this nightly vision signified; when presently your messenger came, and I hurried thither, not to unite, but to separate, what ought not to be joined together. Leave her, Huldbrand! Leave him, Bertalda! He yet belongs to another; and do you not see grief for his lost wife still written on his pale cheek? No bridegroom looks thus, and a voice tells me that if you do not leave him, you will never be happy.”

The three listeners felt in their innermost heart that Father Heilmann spoke the truth, but they would not believe it. Even the old fisherman was now so infatuated that he thought it could not be otherwise than they had settled it in their discussions during the last few days. They therefore all opposed the warnings of the priest

with a wild and gloomy rashness, until at length the holy father quitted the castle with a sad heart, refusing to accept even for a single night the shelter offered, or to enjoy the refreshments brought him. Huldbrand, however, persuaded himself that the priest was full of whims and fancies, and with dawn of day he sent for a father from the nearest monastery, who, without hesitation, promised to perform the ceremony in a few days.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KNIGHT'S DREAM.

IT WAS between night and dawn of day that the knight was lying on his couch, half-waking, half-sleeping. Whenever he was on the point of falling asleep a terror seemed to come upon him and scare his rest away, for his slumbers were haunted with specters. If he tried, however, to rouse himself in good earnest he felt fanned as by the wings of a swan, and he heard the soft murmuring of waters, until soothed by the agreeable delusion, he sunk back again into a half-conscious state. At length he must have fallen sound asleep, for it seemed to him as if he were lifted up upon the fluttering wings of the swans and borne by them far over land and sea, while they sang to him their sweetest music. "The music of the swan! the music of the swan!" he kept saying to himself; "does it not always portend death?" But it had yet another meaning. All at once he felt as if he were hovering over the Mediterranean Sea. A swan was singing musically in his ear that this was the Mediterranean Sea. And while he was looking down upon the waters below they became clear as crystal, so that he could see through them to the bottom. He was delighted at this, for he could see Undine sitting beneath the crystal arch. It is true she was weeping bit-

terly, and looking much sadder than in the happy days when they had lived together at the castle of Ringstetten, especially at their commencement, and afterward also, shortly before they had begun their unhappy Danube excursion. The knight could not help thinking upon all this very fully and deeply, but it did not seem as if Undine perceived him.

Meanwhile Kühleborn had approached her, and was on the point of reproving her for her weeping. But she drew herself up, and looked at him with such a noble and commanding air that he almost shrunk back with fear. "Although I live here beneath the waters," said she, "I have yet brought down my soul with me; and therefore I may well weep, although you cannot divine what such tears are. They too are blessed, for everything is blessed to him in whom a true soul dwells."

He shook his head incredulously, and said, after some reflection: "And yet, niece, you are subject to the laws of our element, and if he marries again and is unfaithful to you, you are in duty bound to take away his life."

"He is a widower to this very hour," replied Undine, "and his sad heart still holds me dear."

"He is, however, at the same time betrothed," laughed Kühleborn, with scorn; "and let only a few days pass, and the priest will have given the nuptial blessing, and then you will have to go upon earth to accomplish the death of him who has taken another to wife."

"That I cannot do," laughed Undine in return; "I have sealed up the fountain securely against myself and my race."

"But suppose he should leave his castle," said Kühleborn, "or should have the fountain opened again! for he thinks little enough of these things."

"It is just for that reason," said Undine, still smiling amid her tears, "it is just for that reason, that he is now

hovering in spirit over the Mediterranean Sea, and is dreaming of this conversation of ours as a warning. I have intentionally arranged it so."

Kühleborn, furious with rage, looked up at the knight, threatened, stamped with his feet, and then swift as an arrow shot under the waves. It seemed as if he were swelling in his fury to the size of a whale. Again the swans began to sing, to flap their wings, and to fly. It seemed to the knight as if he were soaring away over mountains and streams, and that he at length reached the castle Ringstetten, and awoke on his couch.

He did, in reality, awake upon his couch, and his squire coming in at that moment informed him that Father Heilmann was still lingering in the neighborhood; that he had met him the night before in the forest, in a hut which he had formed for himself of the branches of trees, and covered with moss and brushwood. To the question what he was doing here, since he would not give the nuptial blessing, he had answered: "There are other blessings besides those at the nuptial altar, and though I have not gone to the wedding, it may be that I shall be at another solemn ceremony. We must be ready for all things. Besides, marrying and mourning are not so unlike, and every one not willfully blinded must see that well."

The knight placed various strange constructions upon these words, and upon his dream, but it is very difficult to break off a thing which a man has once regarded as certain, and so everything remained as it had been arranged.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE KNIGHT HULDBRAND IS MARRIED.

IF I were to tell you how the marriage-feast passed at castle Ringstetten, it would seem to you as if you saw a heap of bright and pleasant things, but a gloomy veil of mourningspread over them all, the dark hue of which would make the splendor of the whole look less like happiness than a mockery of the emptiness of all earthly joys. It was not that any spectral apparitions disturbed the festive company, for we know that the castle had been secured from the mischief of the threatening water-spirits. But the knight and the fisherman and all the guests felt as if the chief personage were still lacking at the feast, and that this chief personage could be none other than the loved and gentle Undine. Whenever a door opened, the eyes of all were involuntarily turned in that direction, and if it was nothing but the butler with new dishes, or the cup-bearer with a flask of still richer wine, they would look down again sadly, and the flashes of wit and merriment which had passed to and fro, would be extinguished by sad remembrances. The bride was the most thoughtless of all, and therefore the most happy; but even to her it sometimes seemed strange that she should be sitting at the head of the table, wearing a green wreath and gold-embroidered attire, while Undine was lying at the bottom of the Danube, a cold and stiff corpse, or floating away with the current into the mighty ocean. For, ever since her father had spoken of something of the sort, his words were ever ringing in her ear, and this day especially they were not inclined to give place to other thoughts.

The company dispersed early in the evening, not broken up by the bridegroom himself, but sadly and gloomily by the joyless mood of the guests and their forebodings of

evil. Bertalda retired with her maidens, and the knight with his attendants; but at this mournful festival there was no gay, laughing train of bridesmaids and bridesmen.

Bertalda wished to arouse more cheerful thoughts; she ordered a splendid ornament of jewels which Huldbrand had given her, together with rich apparel and veils, to be spread out before her, in order that from these latter she might select the brightest and most beautiful for her morning attire. Her attendants were delighted at the opportunity of expressing their good wishes to their young mistress, not failing at the same time to extol the beauty of the bride in the most lively terms. They were more and more absorbed in these considerations, till Bertalda at length, looking in a mirror, said with a sigh: "Ah, but don't you see plainly how freckled I am growing here at the side of my neck?"

They looked at her throat, and found the freckles as their fair mistress had said, but they called them beauty-spots, and mere tiny blemishes only, tending to enhance the whiteness of her delicate skin. Bertalda shook her head and asserted that a spot was always a defect.

"And I could remove them," she sighed at last, "only the fountain is closed from which I used to have that precious and purifying water. Oh! if I had but a flask of it to-day!"

"Is that all?" said an alert waiting-maid, laughing, as she slipped from the apartment.

"She will not be mad," exclaimed Bertalda, in a pleased and surprised tone, "she will not be so mad as to have the stone removed from the fountain this very evening!" At the same moment they heard the men crossing the courtyard, and could see from the window how the officious waiting-woman was leading them straight up to the fountain, and that they were carrying levers and other instruments on their shoulders. "It is certainly my will," said

Bertalda, smiling, "if only it does not take too long." And, happy in the sense that a look from her now was able to effect what had formerly been so painfully refused her, she watched the progress of the work in the moonlit castle-court.

The men raised the enormous stone with an effort; now and then indeed one of their number would sigh, as he remembered that they were destroying the work of their former beloved mistress. But the labor was far lighter than they had imagined. It seemed as if a power within the spring itself were aiding them in raising the stone.

"It is just," said the workmen to each other in astonishment, "as if the water within had become a springing fountain." And the stone rose higher and higher, and almost without the assistance of the workmen, it rolled slowly down upon the pavement with a hollow sound. But from the opening of the fountain there rose solemnly a white column of water; at first they imagined it had really become a springing fountain, till they perceived that the rising form was a pale female figure veiled in white. She was weeping bitterly, raising her hands wailingly above her head and wringing them, as she walked with a slow and serious step to the castle-building. The servants fled from the spring; the bride, pale and stiff with horror, stood at the window with her attendants. When the figure had now come close beneath her room, it looked moaningly up to her, and Bertalda thought she could recognize beneath the veil the pale features of Undine. But the sorrowing form passed on, sad, reluctant, and faltering, as if passing to execution.

Bertalda screamed out that the knight was to be called, but none of her maids ventured from the spot; and even the bride herself became mute, as if trembling at her own voice.

While they were still standing fearfully at the window,

motionless as statues, the strange wanderer had reached the castle, had passed up the well-known stairs, and through the well-known halls, ever in silent tears. Alas! how differently had she once wandered through them!

The knight, partly undressed, had already dismissed his attendants, and in a mood of deep dejection he was standing before a large mirror; a taper was burning dimly beside him. There was a gentle tap at his door. Undine used to tap thus when she wanted playfully to tease him. "It is all fancy," said he to himself; "I must seek my nuptial bed."

"So you must, but it must be a cold one!" he heard a tearful voice say from without, and then he saw in the mirror his door opening slowly—slowly—and the white figure entered, carefully closing it behind her. "They have opened the spring," said she softly, "and now I am here, and you must die."

He felt in his paralyzed heart that it could not be otherwise, but covering his eyes with his hands he said: "Do not make me mad with terror in my hour of death. If you wear a hideous face behind that veil, do not raise it, but take my life, and let me see you not."

"Alas!" replied the figure, "will you then not look upon me once more? I am as fair as when you wooed me on the promontory."

"Oh, if it were so!" sighed Huldbrand, "and if I might die in your fond embrace!"

"Most gladly, my loved me," said she; and throwing her veil back, her lovely face smiled forth divinely beautiful. Trembling with love and with the approach of death, she kissed him with a holy kiss; but not relaxing her hold she pressed him fervently to her, and as if she would weep away her soul. Tears rushed into the knight's eyes, and seemed to surge through his heaving breast, till at length his breathing ceased, and he fell softly back from the

beautiful arms of Undine, upon the pillows of his couch—a corpse.

“I have wept him to death,” said she to some servants who met her in the ante-chamber; and, passing through the affrighted group, she went slowly out toward the fountain.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE KNIGHT HULDBRAND WAS BURIED.

FATHER HEILMANN had returned to the castle as soon as the death of the lord of Ringstetten had been made known in the neighborhood, and he appeared at the very same moment that the monk who had married the unfortunate couple was fleeing from the gates overwhelmed with fear and terror.

“It is well,” replied Heilmann, when he was informed of this; “now my duties begin, and I need no associate.”

Upon this he began to console the bride, now a widow, small result as it produced upon her worldly thoughtless mind. The old fisherman, on the other hand, although heartily grieved, was far more resigned to the fate which had befallen his daughter and son-in-law, and while Bertalda could not refrain from abusing Undine as a murderess and sorceress, the old man calmly said: “It could not be otherwise after all; I see nothing in it but the judgment of God, and no one’s heart has been more deeply grieved by Huldbrand’s death than that of her by whom it was inflicted—the poor forsaken Undine!”

At the same time he assisted in arranging the funeral solemnities as befitted the rank of the deceased.

The knight was to be interred in the village church-yard which was filled with the graves of his ancestors. And this church had been endowed with rich privileges and

gifts both by these ancestors and by himself. His shield and helmet lay already on the coffin, to be lowered with it into the grave, for Sir Huldbrand, of Ringstetten, had died the last of his race; the mourners began their sorrowful march, singing requiems under the bright, calm canopy of heaven; Father Heilmann walked in advance, bearing a high crucifix, and the inconsolable Bertalda followed, supported by her aged father. Suddenly, in the midst of the black-robed attendants in the widow's train, a snow-white figure was seen, closely veiled, and wringing her hands with fervent sorrow. Those near whom she moved felt a secret dread, and retreated either backward or to the side, increasing by their movements the alarm of the others near to whom the white stranger was now advancing, and thus a confusion in the funeral-train was well-nigh beginning. Some of the military escort were so daring as to address the figure, and to attempt to remove it from the procession; but she seemed to vanish from under their hands, and yet was immediately seen advancing again amid the dismal cortége with slow and solemn step. At length, in consequence of the continued shrinking of the attendants to the right and to the left, she came close behind Bertalda. The figure now moved so slowly that the widow did not perceive it, and it walked meekly and humbly behind her undisturbed.

This lasted till they came to the church-yard, where the procession formed a circle round the open grave. Then Bertalda saw her unbidden companion, and starting up half in anger and half in terror, she commanded her to leave the knight's last resting-place. The veiled figure, however, gently shook her head in refusal, and raised her hands as if in humble supplication to Bertalda, deeply agitating her by the action, and recalling to her with tears how Undine had so kindly wished to give her that coral necklace on the Danube. Father Heilmann motioned with his hand and

commanded silence, as they were to pray in mute devotion over the body, which they were now covering with the earth. Bertalda knelt silently, and all knelt, even the grave-diggers among the rest, when they had finished their task. But when they rose again, the white stranger had vanished; on the spot where she had knelt there gushed out of the turf a little silver spring, which rippled and murmured away till it had almost entirely encircled the knight's grave; then it ran further and emptied itself into a lake which lay by the side of the burial-place. Even to this day the inhabitants of the village show the spring, and cherish the belief that it is the poor rejected Undine, who in this manner still embraces her husband in her loving arms.

THE TWO CAPTAINS.

A NARRATIVE.

THE TWO CAPTAINS.

CHAPTER I.

A MILD summer evening was resting on the shores of Malaga, awakening the guitar of many a merry singer among the ships in the harbor, and in the city houses, and in many an ornamental garden villa. Emulating the voices of the birds, the melodious tones greeted the refreshing coolness, and floated like perfumed exhalations from meadow and water, over the enchanting region. Some troops of infantry who were on the shore, and who purposed to spend the night there, that they might be ready for embarkation early on the following morning, forgot amid the charms of the pleasant even-tide that they ought to devote these last few hours on European soil to ease and slumber; they began to sing military songs, to drink to each other with their flasks filled to the brim with the rich wine of Xeres, toasting to the long life of the mighty Emperor Charles V, who was now besieging the pirate-nest Tunis, and to whose assistance they were about to sail. The merry soldiers were not all of one race. Only two companies consisted of Spaniards; the third was formed of pure Germans, and now and then among the various fellow-combatants, the difference of manners and language had given rise to much bantering. Now, however, the fellowship of the approaching sea voyage and of the glorious perils to be shared, as well as the refreshing feeling which the soft southern evening poured over soul

and sense, united the band of comrades in perfect and undisturbed harmony. The Germans tried to speak Castilian, and the Spaniards to speak German without its occurring to any one to make a fuss about the mistakes and confusions that happened. They mutually helped each other, thinking of nothing else but the good will of their companions, each drawing near to his fellow by means of his own language.

Somewhat apart from the merry tumult, a young German captain, Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen, was reclining under a cork-tree, gazing earnestly up at the stars, apparently in a very different mood to the fresh merry sociability which his comrades knew and loved in him. Presently the Spanish captain, Don Fadrique Mendez, approached him; he was a youth like the other, and was equally skilled in martial exercises, but he was generally as austere and thoughtful as Heimbert was cheerful and gentle. "Pardon, señor," began the solemn Spaniard, "if I disturb you in your meditations. But as I have had the honor of often seeing you as a courageous warrior and faithful brother in arms in many a hot encounter, I would gladly solicit you above all others to do me a knightly service, if it does not interfere with your own plans and projects for this night."

"Dear sir," returned Heimbert courteously; "I have certainly an affair of importance to attend to before sunrise, but till midnight I am perfectly free, and ready to render you any assistance as a brother in arms."

"Enough," said Fadrique, "for at midnight the tones must long have ceased with which I shall have taken farewell of the dearest being I have ever known in this my native city. But that you may be as fully acquainted with the whole affair, as behooves a noble companion, listen to me attentively for a few moments.

"Some time before I left Malaga, to join the army of our great emperor and to aid in spreading the glory of his

arms through Italy, I was devoted, after the fashion of young knights, to the service of a beautiful girl in this city, named Lucila. She had at that time scarcely reached the period which separates childhood from ripe maidenhood, and as I—a boy only just capable of bearing arms—offered my homage with a child-like friendly feeling, it was also received by my young mistress in a similar child-like manner. I marched at length to Italy, and as you yourself know, for we have been companions since then, I was in many a hot fight, and in many an enchantingly alluring region in that luxurious land. Amid all our changes, I held unalterably within me the image of my gentle mistress, never pausing in the honorable service I had vowed to her, although I cannot conceal from you that in so doing it was rather to fulfill the word I had pledged at my departure, than from any impelling and immoderately ardent feeling in my heart. When we returned to my native city from our foreign wanderings, a few weeks ago, I found my mistress married to a rich and noble knight residing here. Fiercer far than love had been, was the jealousy—that almost almighty child of heaven and hell—which now spurred me on to follow Lucila's steps, from her home to the church, from thence to the house of a friend, from thence again to her home or to some noble circle of knights and ladies, and all this as unweariedly, and as closely as was possible. When I had at length assured myself that no other young knight attended her, and that she devoted herself entirely to the husband chosen for her by her parents, rather than desired by herself, I felt perfectly satisfied, and I should not have troubled you at this moment, had not Lucila approached me the day before yesterday, and whispered in my ear that I must not provoke her husband, for he was very passionate and bold; that not the slightest danger threatened her in the matter, because he loved and honored her above everything, but

that his wrath would vent itself all the more furiously upon me. You can readily understand, my noble comrade, that I could not help proving my contempt of all personal danger, by following Lucila more closely than ever, and singing nightly serenades beneath her flower-decked windows, till the morning-star began to be reflected in the sea. This very night Lucila's husband sets out at midnight for Madrid, and from that hour I will in every way avoid the street in which they live; until then, however, as soon as it is sufficiently dark to be suitable for a serenade, I will have love-romances unceasingly sung before his house. It is true I have information that not only he, but Lucila's brothers are ready to enter upon a quarrel with me, and it is for this reason, señor, that I have requested you to bear me company with your good sword in this short expedition."

Heimbart seized the Spaniard's hand as a pledge of his readiness, saying as he did so: "To show you, dear sir, how gladly I will do what you desire of me, I will requite your confidence with confidence, and will relate a little incident which occurred to me in this city, and will beg you, after midnight, also to render me a small service. My story is short, and will not detain us longer than we must wait, before the twilight has become deeper and more gloomy.

"On the day after we arrived here, I amused myself with walking in the beautiful gardens, with which the place abounds. I have now been long in these southern lands, but I cannot but believe that the dreams which transport me nightly back to my German home, are the cause for my feeling everything here so strange and astonishing. At all events, every morning when I wake, I wonder anew, as if I were only just arrived. So I was walking then, like one infatuated, among the aloe-trees, which were scattered among the laurels and oleanders.

Suddenly a cry sounded near me, and a slender girl, dressed in white, fled into my arms fainting, while her companions dispersed past us in every direction. A soldier can always tolerably soon gather his senses together, and I speedily perceived a furious bull was pursuing the beautiful maiden. I threw her quickly over a thickly-planted hedge, and followed her myself, upon which the beast, blind with rage, passed us by, and I have heard no more of it since, except that some young knights in an adjacent court-yard had been making a trial with it previous to a bull-fight, and that it was on this account that it had broken so furiously through the gardens.

“I was now standing quite alone, with the fainting lady in my arms, and she was so wonderfully beautiful to look at that I have never in my life felt happier than I then did, and also never sadder. At last I laid her down on the turf, and sprinkled her angelic brow with water from a neighboring little fountain. And so she came to herself again, and when she opened her bright and lovely eyes, I thought I could imagine how the glorified spirits must feel in heaven. She thanked me with graceful and courteous words, and called me her knight; but in my state of enchantment I could not utter a syllable, and she must have almost thought me dumb. At length my speech returned and the prayer at once was breathed forth from my heart, that the sweet lady would often again allow me to see her in this garden; for that in a few weeks the service of the emperor would drive me into the burning land of Africa, and that until then she should vouchsafe me the happiness of beholding her. She looked at me half smiling, half sadly, and said, ‘Yes.’ And she has kept her word and has appeared almost daily, without our having yet spoken much to each other. For although she has been sometimes quite alone, I could never begin any other topic but that of the happiness of walking by her side. Often she

has sung to me, and I have sung to her also. When I told her yesterday that our departure was so near, her heavenly eyes seemed to me suffused with tears. I must also have looked sorrowful, for she said to me in a consoling tone: 'Oh, pious child-like warrior! one may trust you as one trusts an angel. After midnight, before the morning dawn breaks for your departure, I give you leave to take farewell of me in this very spot. If you could, however, find a true and discreet comrade to watch the entrance from the street, it would be well, for many a soldier may be passing at that hour through the city on his way from some farewell carouse.' Providence has now sent me such a comrade, and at one o'clock I shall go joyfully to the lovely maiden."

"I only wish the service on which you require me were more rich in danger," rejoined Fadrique, "so that I might better prove to you that I am yours with life and limb. But come, noble brother, the hour for my adventure is arrived."

And wrapped in their mantles, the youths walked hastily toward the city; Fadrique carrying his beautiful guitar under his arm.

CHAPTER II.

THE night smelling flowers in Lucila's window were already beginning to emit their refreshing perfume, when Fadrique, leaning in the shadow of the angle of an old church opposite, began to tune his guitar. Heimbert had stationed himself not far from him, behind a pillar, his drawn sword under his mantle, and his clear blue eyes, like two watching stars, looking calmly and penetrating around. Fadrique sang:

“ Upon a meadow, green with spring,
A little flower was blossoming,
With petals red and snowy white;
To me a youth, my soul's delight
Within that blossom lay,
And I have loved my song to indite
And flattering homage pay.

“ Since then a wanderer I have been,
And many a bloody strife have seen;
And now returned, I see
The little floweret stands no more,
Upon the meadow as before;
Transplanted by a gardener's care
And hedged by golden trellis there,
It is denied to me.

“ I grudge him not his trellised guard,
His bolts of iron strongly barred;
Yet, wandering in the cool night air
I touch my zither's string,
And as afore, her beauties rare,
Her wondrous graces sing,
And e'en the gardener shall not dare
Refuse the praise I bring.”

“That depends, señor,” said a man, stepping close, and as he thought unobserved before Fadrique; but the latter had already been informed of his approach by a sign from his watchful friend, and he was therefore ready to answer with the greater coolness:

“If you wish, señor, to commence a suit with my guitar, she has, at all events, a tongue of steel, which has already on many occasions done her excellent service. With whom is it your pleasure to speak, with the guitar or the advocate?”

While the stranger was silent from embarrassment, two mantled figures had approached Heimbert and remained standing a few steps from him, as if to cut off Fadrique's

flight in case he intended to escape. "I believe, dear sirs," said Heimbert, in a courteous tone, "we are here on the same errand, namely to prevent any intrusion upon the conference of yonder knights. At least, as far as I am concerned, you may rely upon it that any one who attempts to interfere in their affair will receive my dagger in his heart. Be of good cheer, therefore, I think we shall both do our duty." The two gentlemen bowed courteously and were silent.

The quiet self-possession with which the two soldiers carried on the whole affair, was most embarrassing to their three adversaries, and they were at a loss to know how they should begin the dispute. At last Fadrique again touched the strings of his guitar, and was preparing to begin another song. This mark of contempt, and apparent disregard of danger and hazard, so enraged Lucila's husband (for it was he who had taken his stand by Don Fadrique), that without further delay he drew his sword from his sheath, and with a voice of suppressed rage, called out: "Draw, or I shall stab you!"

"Very gladly, señor," replied Fadrique, quietly. "You need not threaten me; you might as well have said so calmly." And so saying, he placed his guitar carefully in a niche in the church-wall, seized his sword, and bowing gracefully to his opponent, the fight began.

At first the two figures by Heimbert's side, who were Lucila's brothers, remained quite quiet; but when Fadrique began to get the better of their brother-in-law, they appeared as if they intended to take part in the fight. Heimbert therefore made his mighty sword gleam in the moonlight, and said: "Dear sirs, you will not surely oblige me to execute that of which I previously assured you? I pray you not to compel me to do so; but if it can not be otherwise, I must honorably keep my word, you may rely upon it." The two young men remained from

that time motionless, surprised both at the decision and at the true-hearted friendliness that lay in Heimbert's words.

Meanwhile Don Fadrique, although pressing hard upon his adversary, had generously avoided wounding him, and when at last by a dexterous movement he wrested his sword from him, Lucila's husband, surprised at the unexpected advantage and in alarm at being thus disarmed, retreated a few steps. But Fadrique threw the weapon adroitly into the air, and catching it again near the point of the blade, he said, as he gracefully presented the hilt to his opponent: "Take it, señor, and I hope our affair of honor is now settled, as you will grant under these circumstances that I am only here to show that I fear no sword-thrust in the world. The bell of the old cathedral is now ringing twelve o'clock, and I give you my word of honor as a knight and a soldier that neither is Doña Lucila pleased with my attentions, nor am I pleased with paying them; from henceforth, and were I to remain a hundred years in Malaga, I would not continue to serenade her in this spot. So proceed on your journey, and God be with you." He then once more greeted his conquered adversary with serious and solemn courtesy, and withdrew.

Heimbert followed him, after having cordially shaken hands with the two youths, saying: "No, dear young sirs, do not let it ever again enter your heads to interfere in any honorable contest. Do you understand me?"

He soon overtook his companion, and walked on by his side so full of ardent expectation, and with his heart beating so joyfully and yet so painfully, that he could not utter a single word. Don Fadrique Mendez was also silent; it was not till Heimbert paused before an ornamented garden gate, and pointed cheerfully to the pomegranate boughs, richly laden with fruits, which overhung it, saying: "This is the place, dear comrade," that the Spaniard appeared as

if about to ask a question, but turning quickly round, he merely said:

“I am pledged to guard this entrance for you till dawn. You have my word of honor for it.” So saying, he began walking to and fro before the gate, with drawn sword, like a sentinel, and Heimbert, trembling with joy, glided within the gloomy and aromatic shrubberies.

CHAPTER III.

HE was not long in seeking the bright star, which he indeed felt was destined henceforth to guide the course of his whole life. The delicate form approached him not far from the entrance; weeping softly, it seemed to him in the light of the full moon which was just rising, and yet smiling with such infinite grace that her tears were rather like a pearly ornament than a veil of sorrow. In deep and infinite joy and sorrow the two lovers wandered silently together through the flowery groves, now and then a branch waving in the night-air would touch the guitar on the lady's arm, and it would breathe forth a slight murmur which blended with the song of the nightingale, or the delicate fingers of the girl would tremble over the strings and awaken a few scattered chords, while the shooting stars seemed as if following the tones of the instrument as they died away.

Oh, truly happy was this night both to the youth and the maiden, for no rash wish or impure desire passed even fleetingly across their minds. They walked on side by side, happy that Providence had allowed them this delight, and so little desiring any other blessing that even the transitoriness of that they were now enjoying floated away into the background of their thoughts.

In the middle of the beautiful garden there was a large

open lawn, ornamented with statues, and surrounding a beautiful and splashing fountain. The two lovers sat down on its brink, now gazing at the waters sparkling in the moonlight and now delighting in the contemplation of each other's beauty. The maiden touched her guitar, and Heimberty, impelled by a feeling scarcely intelligible to himself, sang the following words to it:

“ There is a sweet life linked with mine,
But I cannot tell its name;
Oh! would it but to me consign,
The secret of that life divine,
That so my lips in whispers sweet
And gentle songs, might e'en repeat
All that my heart would fain proclaim.”

He suddenly paused, and blushed deeply, fearing he had been too bold. The lady blushed also, touched her guitar-strings with a half-abstracted air, and at last sang as if dreamily:

“ By the spring where moonlight's gleams
O'er the sparkling waters pass,
Who is sitting by the youth,
Singing on the soft green grass?
Shall the maiden tell her name?
When though all unknown it be,
Her heart is glowing with her shame,
And her cheeks burn anxiously?
First, let the youthful knight be named.
’Tis he, that on that glorious day,
Fought in Castilia's proud array;
’Tis he, the youth of sixteen years,
At Pavia, who his fortunes tried,
The Frenchman's fear, the Spaniard's pride.
Heimberty is the hero's name;
Victorious in many a fight!
And beside the valiant knight,
Sitting on the soft green grass,
Though her name her lips shall pass,
Doña Clara feels no shame.”

"Oh!" said Heimbert, blushing from another cause than before, "Oh, Doña Clara, that affair at Pavia was nothing but a merry and victorious tournament, and even if occasionally since then I have been engaged in a tougher contest, how have I ever merited as a reward the overwhelming bliss I am now enjoying! Now I know what your name is, and I may in future address you by it, my angelic Doña Clara, my blessed and beautiful Doña Clara! But tell me now, who has given you such a favorable report of my achievements, that I may ever regard him with grateful affection?"

"Does the noble Heimbert of Waldhausen suppose," rejoined Clara, "that the noble houses of Spain had none of their sons where he stood in the battle? You must have surely seen them fighting by your side, and must I not have heard of your glories through the lips of my own people?"

The silvery tones of a little bell sounded just then from a neighboring palace, and Clara whispered: "It is time to part. Adieu, my hero!" And she smiled on the youth through her gushing tears, and bent toward him, and he almost fancied he felt a sweet kiss breathed from her lips. When he fully recovered himself, Clara had disappeared, the morning clouds were beginning to wear the rosy hue of dawn, and Heimbert, with a heaven of love's proud happiness in his heart, returned to his watchful friend at the garden gate.

CHAPTER IV.

"HALT!" exclaimed Fadrique, as Heimbert appeared from the garden, holding his drawn sword toward him ready for attack.

"Stop, you are mistaken my good comrade," said the German, smiling; "it is I whom you see before you."

"Do not imagine, Knight Heimbert of Waldhausen," said Fadrique, "that I mistake you. But my promise is discharged, my hour of guard has been honorably kept, and now I beg you without further delay to prepare yourself, and fight for your life until heart's blood has ceased to flow through these veins."

"Good heavens!" sighed Heimbert, "I have often heard that in these southern lands there are witches, who deprive people of their senses by magic arts and incantations. But I have never experienced anything of the sort until to-day. Compose yourself, my dear good comrade, and go with me back to the shore."

Fadrique laughed fiercely, and answered: "Set aside your silly delusion, and if you must have everything explained to you, word by word, in order to understand it, know then, that the lady whom you came to meet in the shrubbery of this my garden is Doña Clara Mendez, my only sister. Quick, therefore, and without further preamble, draw!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the German, not touching his weapon. "You shall be my brother-in-law, Fadrique, and not my murderer, and still less will I be yours." Fadrique only shook his head indignantly, and advanced toward his comrade with measured steps for an encounter. Heimbert, however, still remained immovable and said: "No, Fadrique, I cannot now or ever do you harm. For besides the love I bear your sister, it must certainly have been you who has spoken to her so honorably of my military expeditions in Italy."

"When I did so," replied Fadrique, in a fury, "I was a fool. But, dallying coward, out with your sword, or——"

Before Fadrique had finished speaking, Heimbert, burning with indignation, exclaimed: "The devil himself

could not bear that!" and drawing his sword from the scabbard, the two young captains rushed fiercely and resolutely to the attack.

Different indeed was this contest to that previously fought by Fadrique with Lucila's husband. The two young soldiers well understood their weapons, and strove with each other with equal boldness, their swords flashing like rays of light as now this one, now that one, hurled a lightning thrust at his adversary, which was with similar speed and dexterity turned aside. Firmly they pressed the left foot, as if rooted in the ground, while the right advanced to the bold onset, and then again they quickly retired to the safer attitude of defence. From the self-possession and the quiet unremitting anger with which both the combatants fought, it was evident that one of the two would find his grave under the overhanging branches of the orange-tree, which were now tinged with the red glow of morning, and this would undoubtedly have been the case had not the report of a cannon from the harbor sounded through the silence of the twilight.

The combatants paused, as if at some word of command to be obeyed by both, and listened, counting to themselves; then, as each uttered the number thirty, a second gun was heard.

"It is the signal for immediate embarkation, señor," said Don Fadrique; "we are now in the emperor's service, and all dispute ceases which is not against the foes of Charles the Fifth."

"Right," replied Heimbert; "but when there is an end of Tunis and the whole war, I shall demand satisfaction for that 'dallying coward.'"

"And I for that intercourse with my sister," said Fadrique.

"Certainly," rejoined the other; and, so saying, the two captains hurried down to the strand, and arranged the

embarkation of their troops; while the sun, rising over the sea, shone upon them both in the same vessel.

CHAPTER V.

THE voyagers had for some time to battle with contrary winds, and when at length they came in sight of the coasts of Barbary, the darkness of evening had closed so deeply over the sea that no pilot in the little squadron ventured to ride at anchor on the shallow shore. They cruised about on the calm waters, waiting for the morning; and the soldiers, full of laudable ambition for combat, stood impatiently in crowds on the deck, straining their longing eyes to see the theater of their future deeds.

Meanwhile the heavy firing of besiegers and besieged thundered unceasingly from the fortress of Goletta, and as the night darkened the scene with massy clouds the flames of burning fragments became more visible, and the fiery course of the red bullets was perceptible as they crossed each other in their path, while their effects in fire and devastation were fearful to behold. It was evident that the Mussulmans had been attempting a sally, for a sharp fire of musketry burst forth suddenly amid the roaring of the cannon. The fight was approaching the trenches of the Christians, and on board the vessels none were agreed whether the besiegers were in danger or not. At length they saw that the Turks were driven back into the fortress; the Christian army pursued them, and a shout was heard from the Spanish camp as of one loud "Victory!" and the cry, "Goletta was taken!"

How the troops on board the vessels—consisting of young and courage-trying men—burned with ardor, and their hearts beat at the glorious spectacle, need not be

detailed to those who carry a brave heart within their own bosoms, and to all others any description would be lost.

Heimbert and Fadrique stood close to each other. "I do not know," said the latter, speaking to himself, "but I feel as if to-morrow I must plant my standard upon yonder height, which is now lighted up with the red glow of the bullets and burning flames in Goletta."

"That is just what I feel!" said Heimbert.

The two angry captains then relapsed into silence, and turned indignantly away.

The longed-for morning at length dawned, the vessels approached the shore, and the landing of the troops began, while an officer was at once dispatched to the camp to announce the arrival of the reinforcements to the mighty general Alba. The soldiers were hastily ranged on the beach, they put themselves and their weapons in order, and were soon standing in battle array, ready for their great leader. Clouds of dust rose in the gray twilight, the returning officer announced the approach of the general, and as Alba signifies "morning" in the Castilian tongue, the Spaniards raised a shout of rejoicing at the coincidence, as at some favorable omen, for as the knightly train approached, the first beams of the rising sun became visible.

The grave and haggard form of the general was seen mounted on a tall Andalusian charger of the deepest black. Having galloped once up and down the lines, he stopped his powerful horse in the middle, and looking along the ranks with an air of grave satisfaction, he said: "You pass muster well. That is well. I like it to be so. It is plain to see that you are tried soldiers, in spite of your youth. We will first hold a review, and then I will lead you to something more agreeable."

So saying, he dismounted, and walking toward the right wing, he began to inspect one troop after another in the

closest manner, with the captain of each company at his side, that he might receive from him accurate account upon the minutest particulars. Sometimes a cannon-ball from the fortress would whizz over the heads of the men; then Alba would stand still, and cast a keen glance over the soldiers before him. But when he saw that not an eyelash moved, a smile of satisfaction passed over his severe, pale face.

When he had inspected both divisions, he again mounted his horse, and once more galloped into the middle. Then, stroking his long beard, he said: "You are in good order, soldiers, and therefore you shall take your part in this glorious day, which is just dawning for our whole Christian armada. We will attack Barbarossa, soldiers. Do you not already hear the drums and fifes in the camp? Do you see him advancing yonder to meet the emperor? That side of his position is assigned to you!"

"Vivat Carolus Quintus!" resounded through the ranks.

Alba beckoned the captains to him, and assigned to each his duty. He usually mingled German and Spanish troops together in order to stimulate the courage of the combatants still higher by emulation. So it happened even now, that Heimbert and Fadrique were commanded to storm the very same height, which, now gleaming with the morning light, they at once recognized as that which had shone out so fiercely and full of promise the night before.

CHAPTER VI.

THIRICE had Fadrique and Heimbert almost forced their way to a rampart in the fortifications, and thrice had they been repulsed with their men into the valley below by the fierce opposition of the Turks. The Mussulmans shouted after the retreating foe, clashed their weapons with the

triumph of victory, and with a scornful laugh asked whether they would not come up again to give heart and brain to the scimitar and their limbs to the falling beams of wood. The two captains, gnashing their teeth with fury, arranged their ranks anew; for after three vain assaults they had to move closer together to fill the places of the slain and the mortally wounded. Meanwhile a murmur ran through the Christian army, that a witch was fighting among their foes and helping them to conquer.

Duke Alba rode to the point of attack, and looked scrutinizingly at the breach they had made. "Not yet broken through the enemy here!" said he, shaking his head. "I am surprised. From two such youths and such troops, I should have expected it."

"Do you hear that? Do you hear that?" exclaimed the two captains, as they paced along their lines, repeating the general's words.

The soldiers shouted loudly, and demanded to be once more led against the enemy; even those who were mortally wounded shouted with a last effort: "Forward, comrades!"

The great Alba at once sprang like an arrow from his horse, wrested a partisan from the stiff hand of one of the slain, and standing in front of the two companies, he cried: "I will take part in your glory. In the name of God and the blessed Virgin, forward, my children!"

And joyfully they rushed up the hill, every heart beating with confidence, while the war-cry was raised triumphantly; some even began already to shout "Victory! victory!" and the Mussulmans paused and wavered. Suddenly, like the vision of an avenging angel, a maiden, dressed in purple garments embroidered with gold, appeared in the Turkish ranks, and those who were terrified before, again shouted "Allah!" calling at the same time, "Zelinda, Zelinda!" The maiden, however drew a small box from under her arm, and opening it, she breathed

into it, and hurled it down among the Christian troops. And forth from the fatal chest there burst a whole fire of rockets, grenades and other fearful messengers of death. The startled soldiers paused in their assault. "Forward!" cried Alba. "Forward!" cried the two captains; but a flaming arrow just then fastened on the duke's plumed hat and hissed and crackled round his head, so that the general fell fainting down the height. Then the German and Spanish infantry fled uncontrollably from the fearful ascent. Again the storm had been repulsed. The Mussulmans shouted, and like a fatal star Zelinda's beauty shone in the midst of the flying troops.

When Alba opened his eyes, Heimbart was standing over him, with his mantle, arm and face scorched with the fire, which he had not only just extinguished on his general's head, but by throwing himself over him he had saved him from a second body of flame rolled down the height in the same direction. The duke was thanking his youthful deliverer, when some soldiers came up, looking for him to apprise him that the Saracen power was beginning an attack on the opposite wing of the army. Without losing a word, Alba threw himself on the first horse brought him, and galloped away to the spot where the most threatening danger summoned him.

Fadrique stood with his glowing eye fixed on the rampart, where the brilliant form of Zelinda might be seen, with a two-edged spear, ready to be hurled, uplifted by her snow-white arm, and raising her voice, now in encouraging tones to the Mussulmans in Arabic, and again speaking scornfully to the Christians in Spanish. At last Fadrique exclaimed: "Oh, foolish being! she thinks to daunt me, and yet she places herself before me, an alluring and irresistible war-prize!"

And as if magic wings had sprung from his shoulders, he began to fly up the height with such rapidity that Alba's

violent descent seemed but a lazy snail's pace. Before any one was aware, he was already on the height, and wresting spear and shield from the maiden, he had seized her in his arms, and was attempting to bear her away, while Zelinda in anxious despair clung to the palisade with both her hands. Her cry for help was unavailing, partly because the Turks imagined that the magic power of the maiden was annihilated by the almost equally wondrous deed of the youth, and partly also because the faithful Heimbart, quickly perceiving his comrade's daring feat, had led both troops to a renewed attack, and now stood by his side on the height, fighting hand to hand with the defenders. This time the fury of the Mussulmans, weakened as they were by superstition and surprise, could avail nothing against the heroic advance of the Christian soldiers. The Spaniards and Germans speedily broke through the enemy, assisted by the watchful squadrons of their army. The Mahometans fled with frightful howling, the battle with its stream of victory rolled ever on, and the banner of the holy German empire and that of the royal house of Castile waved victorious over the glorious battle-field before the walls of Tunis.

CHAPTER VII.

In the confusion of the conquering and the conquered, Zelinda had wrested herself from Fadrique's arms, and had fled from him with such swiftness that, however much love and desire might have given wings to his pursuit, she was soon out of sight in a spot so well known to her. All the more vehement was the fury of the excited Spaniard against the infidel foe. Wherever a little host made a fresh stand to oppose the Christians, he would hasten forward with the troops, who ranged themselves round him,

resistless as he was, as round a banner of victory, while Heimbert ever remained at his side like a faithful shield, guarding off many a danger to which the youth, intoxicated with rage and success, exposed himself without consideration. The following day they heard of Barbarossa's flight from the city, and the victorious troops advanced without resistance through the gates of Tunis. Fadrique's and Heimbert's companies were always together.

Thick clouds of smoke began to curl through the streets; the soldiers were obliged to shake off the glowing and dusty flakes from their mantles and richly-plumed helmets, where they often rested smoldering. "I trust the enemy in his despair has not set fire to some magazine full of powder!" exclaimed the thoughtful Heimbert; and Fadrique, showing by a sign that he agreed with his surmise, hastened on to the spot from whence the smoke proceeded, the troops courageously pressing after him.

The sudden turn of a street brought them in view of a magnificent palace, from the beautifully ornamented windows of which the flames were emerging, looking like torches of death in their fitful glow, and lighting up the splendid building in the hour of its ruin in the grandest manner, now illuminating this and now that part of the gigantic structure, and then again relapsing into a fearful darkness of smoke and vapor.

And like some faultless statue, the ornament of the whole edifice, there stood Zelinda upon a high and giddy projection, while the tongues of flame wreathed around her from below, calling to her companions in the faith to help her in saving the wisdom of centuries, which was preserved in this building. The projection on which she stood began to totter from the fervent heat raging beneath it, and a few stones gave way; Fadrique called with a voice full of anguish to the endangered lady, and scarcely had she withdrawn her foot from the spot when the stone on

which she had been standing broke away and came rattling down on the pavement. Zelinda disappeared within the burning palace, and Fadrique rushed up its marble staircase; Heimbert, his faithful companion, following him.

Their hasty steps carried them through lofty resounding halls; the architecture over their heads was a maze of high arches, and one chamber led into another almost like a labyrinth. The walls displayed on all sides magnificent shelves, in which were to be seen stored rolls of parchment, papyrus, and palm-leaf, partly inscribed with the characters of long-vanished centuries, and which were now to perish themselves. For the flames were already crackling among them, and stretching their serpent-like and fiery heads from one case of treasures to another; while some Spanish soldiers, barbarous in their fury, and hoping for plunder, and finding nothing but inscribed rolls within the gorgeous building, passed from disappointment to rage, and aided the flames; the more so, as they regarded the inscriptions as the work of evil magicians. Fadrique flew as in a dream through the strange half-consumed halls, ever calling Zelinda! thinking and regarding nothing but her enchanting beauty. Long did Heimbert remain at his side, until at length they both reached a cedar staircase leading to an upper story; here Fadrique paused to listen, and exclaiming: "She is speaking up there! she is speaking loud! she needs my help!" he dashed up the already burning steps. Heimbert hesitated a moment; he saw the staircase already tottering, and he thought to give a warning cry to his companion; but at the same moment the light ornamental ascent gave way and burst into flames. He could just see Fadrique clinging above to a brass grating, and swinging himself up to it, but all means of following him were destroyed. Quickly recollecting himself, Heimbert lost no time in idly gazing, but hastened

through the adjacent halls in search of another flight of steps, which would lead him to his vanished friend.

Meanwhile Fadrique, following the enchanting voice, had reached a gallery in the midst of which, the floor having fallen in, there was a fearful abyss of flames, though the pillars on each side were still standing. Opposite to him the youth perceived the longed-for maiden, clinging with one hand to a pillar, while with the other she was threatening back some Spanish soldiers, who seemed ready at any moment to seize her, and her delicate foot was already hovering over the edge of the glowing ruins. For Fadrique to go to her was impossible; the breadth of the opening rendered even a desperate leap unavailing. Trembling lest his call might make the maiden precipitate herself into the abyss, either in terror or despairing anger, he only softly raised his voice and whispered as with a breath over the flaming gulf: "Oh, Zelinda, Zelinda! do not give way to such frightful thoughts! Your preserver is here!" The maiden turned her queenly head, and when Fadrique saw her calm and composed demeanor, he cried to the soldiers on the other side with all the thunder of his warrior's voice: "Back, ye insolent plunderers! Whoever advances but one step to the lady shall feel the vengeance of my arm!"

They started and seemed on the point of withdrawing, when one of their number said: "The knight cannot touch us, the gulf between us is too broad for that. And as for the lady's throwing herself down—it almost looks as if the young knight were her lover, and whoever has a lover is not likely to be so hasty about throwing herself down." All laughed at this, and again advanced. Zelinda tottered at the edge of the abyss. But with the courage of a lion Fadrique had torn his target from his arm, and hurling it with his right hand, he flung it at the soldiers with such a sure aim that the rash leader, struck on the

head, fell senseless to the ground! The rest again stood still.

“Away with you!” cried Fadrique, authoritatively, “or my dagger shall strike the next as surely, and then I swear I will never rest till I have found out your whole gang and appeased my rage.” The dagger gleamed in the youth’s hand, but yet more fearfully gleamed the fury in his eyes, and the soldiers fled. Then Zelinda bowed gratefully to her preserver, took up a roll of palm-leaves which lay at her feet, and which must have previously slipped from her hand, and then vanished hastily through a side-door of the gallery. Henceforth Fadrique sought her in vain in the burning palace.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE great Alba held a council with his chief officers in an open place in the middle of the conquered city, and, by means of interpreters, sent question after question to the Turkish prisoners as to the fate of the beautiful woman who had been seen animating them on the ramparts, and who was certainly the most exquisite enchantress that had ever visited the earth. Nothing very distinct was to be gained from the answers, for although the interrogated all knew of the beautiful Zelinda as a noble lady versed in magic lore, and acknowledged by the whole people, they were utterly unable to state from whence she had come to Tunis and whither she had now fled. When at last they began to threaten the prisoners as obstinate, an old Dervish, hitherto unnoticed, pressed forward, and said with a gloomy smile: “Whoever has a desire to seek the lady, may set out when he chooses. I will conceal nothing from him of what I know of her direction, and I know something. But I must first of all receive the promise that I shall not

be compelled to accompany as guide. My lips otherwise will remain sealed forever, and you may do with me what you will."

He looked like one who intended to keep his word, and Alba, pleased with the firmness of the man, which harmonized well with his own mind, gave him the desired assurance, and the Dervish began his relation. He was once, he said, wandering in the almost infinite desert of Sahara, impelled perhaps by rash curiosity, perhaps by higher motives; he had lost his way there, and had at last, wearied to death, reached one of those fertile islands of that sea of sand which are called oases. Then followed, sparkling with oriental vivacity, a description of the wonderful things seen there, now filling the hearts of his hearers with sweet longing, and then again making their hair stand on end with horror, though from the strange pronunciation of the speaker, and the flowing rapidity of his words, the half was scarcely understood. The end of all this at length was, that Zelinda dwelt on that oasis, in the midst of the pathless sand-plains of the desert, surrounded by magic horrors; and also, as the Dervish knew for certain, that she had left about half an hour ago on her way thither. The almost contemptuous words with which he concluded his narration plainly showed that he desired nothing more earnestly than to seduce some Christians to undertake a journey which must terminate inevitably in their destruction. At the same time he added a solemn oath that everything was truly as he had stated it, and he did this in a firm and grave manner, as a man who knows that he is speaking the most indubitable truth. Surprised and thoughtful, the circle of officers held their council round him.

Then Heimbart stepped forward with an air as if of request: he had just received a summons to leave the burning palace, where he had been seeking his friend, and had

been appointed to the place of council because it was necessary to arrange the troops here in readiness for any possible rising in the conquered city. "What do you wish, my young hero?" said Alba, recognizing him as he appeared. "I know your smiling blooming countenance well. You were but lately sheltering me like a protecting angel. I am so sure that you make no request but what is honorable and knightly, that anything you may possibly desire is granted beforehand."

"My great duke," replied Heimbert, with cheeks glowing with pleasure, "if I may then venture to ask a favor, will you grant me permission to follow the beautiful Zelinda at once in the direction which this wonderful Dervish has pointed out?"

The great general bowed in assent, and added: "So noble an adventure could not be consigned to a more noble knight!"

"I do not know that!" said an angry voice from the throng. "But well do I know that to me above all others this adventure belongs, even were it assigned as a reward for the capture of Tunis. For who was the first on the height and within the city?"

"That was Don Fadrique Mendez," said Heimbert, taking the speaker by the hand, and leading him before the general. "If I now for his sake must forfeit my promised reward, I must patiently submit; for he has rendered better service than I have done to the emperor and the army."

"Neither of you shall forfeit his reward," said the great Alba. "Each has permission from this moment to seek the maiden in whatever way it seems to him most advisable."

And swift as lightning, the two young captains quitted the circle of officers in opposite directions.

CHAPTER IX.

A SEA of sand, stretching out in the distant horizon, without one object to mark its extensive surface, white and desolate in its vastness—such is the scene which proclaims the fearful desert of Sahara to the eye of the wanderer who has lost himself in these frightful regions. In this also it resembles the sea, that it casts up waves, and often a misty vapor hangs over its surface. But there is not the soft play of waves which unite all the coasts of the earth, each wave as it rolls in bringing a message from the remotest and fairest island kingdoms, and again rolling back, as it were, with an answer, in a sort of love-flowing dance. No ; there is here only the melancholy sporting of the hot wind with faithless dust, which ever falls back again into its joyless basin, and never reaches the rest of the solid land with its happy human dwellings. There is here none of the sweet cool sea-breeze in which kindly fairies seem carrying on their graceful sport, forming blooming gardens and pillared palaces—there is only a suffocating vapor, rebelliously given back to the glowing sun from the unfruitful sands.

Hither the two youths arrived at the same time, and paused, gazing with dismay at the pathless chaos before them. Zelinda's track, which was not easily hidden or lost, had hitherto obliged them almost always to remain together—dissatisfied as Fadrique was at the circumstance, and angry as were the glances he cast at his unwelcome companion. Each had hoped to overtake Zelinda before she had reached the desert, feeling how almost impossible it would be to find her once she had entered it. That hope was now at an end, and although in answer to the inquiries they made in the Barbary villages on the frontier, they heard that a wanderer going southward in

the desert, and guiding his course by the stars, would, according to tradition, arrive at length at a wonderfully fertile oasis, the abode of a divinely beautiful enchantress, yet everything appeared highly uncertain and dispiriting, and was rendered still more so by the avalanches of dust before the travelers' view.

The youths looked sadly at the prospect before them, and their horses snorted and started back at the horrible plain, as though it were some insidious quicksand, and even the riders themselves were seized with doubt and dismay. Suddenly they sprung from their saddles, as at some word of command, unbridled their horses, loosened their girths, and turned them loose on the desert, that they might find their way back to some happier dwelling-place. Then, taking some provision from their saddlebags, they placed it on their shoulders, and casting aside their heavy riding-boots, they plunged like two courageous swimmers into the trackless waste.

CHAPTER X.

WITH no other guide than the sun by day, and by night the host of stars, the two captains soon lost sight of each other, and all the sooner as Fadrique avoided intentionally the object of his aversion. Heimbart, on the other hand, had no thought but the attainment of his aim, and full of joyful confidence in God's assistance he pursued his course in a southerly direction.

Many nights and many days had passed, when one evening, as the twilight was coming on, Heimbart was standing alone in the endless desert, unable to descry a single object all round on which his eye could rest. His light flask was empty, and the evening brought with it, instead of the hoped-for coolness, a suffocating whirlwind of sand,

so that the exhausted wanderer was obliged to press his burning face to the burning soil in order to escape in some measure the fatal cloud. Now and then he heard something passing him, or rustling over him as with the sound of a sweeping mantle, and he would raise himself in anxious haste; but he only saw what he had already too often seen in the daytime—the wild beasts of the wilderness roaming at liberty through the desert waste. Sometimes it was an ugly camel, then it was a long-necked and disproportioned giraffe, and then again a long-legged ostrich hastening away with its wings outspread. They all appeared to scorn him, and he had already taken his resolve to open his eyes no more, and to give himself up to his fate, without allowing these horrible and strange creatures to disturb his mind in the hour of death.

Presently it seemed to him as if he heard the hoofs and neighing of a horse, and suddenly something halted close beside him, and he thought he caught the sound of a man's voice. Half unwillingly, he could not resist raising himself wearily, and he saw before him a rider in an Arab's dress mounted on a slender Arabian horse. Overcome with joy at finding himself within reach of human help, he exclaimed: "Welcome, oh man, in this fearful solitude! If thou canst, succor me, thy fellow-man, who must otherwise perish with thirst!" Then remembering that the tones of his dear German mother-tongue were not intelligible in this joyless region, he repeated the same words in the mixed dialect, generally called the *Lingua Romana*, universally used by heathens, Mohammedans, and Christians in those parts of the world where they have most intercourse with each other.

The Arab still remained silent, and looked as if scornfully laughing at his strange discovery. At length he replied in the same dialect: "I was also in Barbarossa's fight, and if, sir knight, our overthrow bitterly enraged

me then, I find no small compensation for it in the fact of seeing one of the conquerors lying so pitifully before me."

"Pitifully!" exclaimed Heimberty, angrily, and his wounded sense of honor giving him back for a moment all his strength, he seized his sword and stood ready for an encounter.

"Oho!" laughed the Arab, "does the Christian viper still hiss so strongly? Then it only behoves me to put spurs to my horse and leave thee to perish here, thou lost creeping worm!"

"Ride to the devil, thou dog of a heathen!" retorted Heimberty; "rather than entreat a crumb of thee, I will die here, unless the good God sends me manna in the wilderness."

And the Arab spurred forward his swift steed, and galloped away a couple of hundred paces, laughing with scorn. Then he paused, and looking round to Heimberty, he trotted back and said: "Thou seemest too good, methinks, to perish here of hunger and thirst. Beware! my good saber shall touch thee."

Heimberty, who had again stretched himself hopelessly on the burning sand, was quickly roused to his feet by these words, and seized his sword; and sudden as was the spring with which the Arab's horse flew toward him, the stout German warrior stood ready to parry the blow, and the thrust which the Arab aimed at him in the Mohammedan manner, he ward off with certainty and skill.

Again and again the Arab sprung similarly here and there, vainly hoping to give his antagonist a death-blow. At last, overcome by impatience, he approached so boldly that Heimberty, warding off the threatening weapon, had time to seize the Arab by the girdle and drag him from the fast-galloping horse. The violence of the movement threw Heimberty also on the ground, but he lay above his opponent, and holding close before his eyes a dagger,

which he had dexterously drawn from his girdle, he exclaimed: "Wilt thou have mercy or death?"

The Arab trembling, cast down his eyes before the gleaming and murderous weapon, and said: "Show mercy to me, mighty warrior; I surrender to thee." Heimbert then ordered him to throw away the saber he still held in his right hand. He did so, and both combatants rose, and again sunk down upon the sand, for the victor was far more weary than the vanquished.

The Arab's good horse meanwhile had trotted toward them, according to the habit of those noble animals who never forsake their fallen master. It now stood behind the two men, stretching out its long slender neck affectionately toward them.

"Arab," said Heimbert, with exhausted voice, "take from thy horse what provision thou hast with thee, and place it before me."

The vanquished man humbly did as he was commanded, now just as much submitting to the will of the conqueror as he had before exhibited his animosity in anger and revenge. After a few draughts of palm-wine from the skin, Heimbert looked at the youth under a new aspect; he then partook of some fruits, drank more of the palm-wine, and at length said: "You are going to ride still further to-night, young man?"

"Yes, indeed," replied the Arab, sadly; "on a distant oasis there dwells my aged father and my blooming bride. Now—even if you set me at full liberty—I must perish in the heat of this barren desert, for want of sustenance, before I can reach my lovely home."

"Is it, perhaps," asked Heimbert, "the oasis on which the mighty enchantress, Zelinda, dwells?"

"Allah, protect me!" cried the Arab, clasping his hands. "Zelinda's wondrous isle offers no hospitable shelter to any but magicians. It lies far away in the scorching south, while our friendly oasis is toward the cooler west."

"I only asked in case we might be traveling companions," said Heimberty, courteously. "If that cannot be, we must certainly divide the provisions; for I would not have so brave a warrior as you perish with hunger and thirst."

So saying, the young captain began to arrange the provisions in two portions, placing the larger on his left, and the smaller at his right; he then desired the Arab to take the former, and added to his astonished companion: "See, good sir, I have either not much further to travel, or I shall perish in the desert; I feel that it will be so. Besides, I cannot carry half so much on foot as you can on horseback."

"Knight! victorious knight!" cried the amazed Mussulman, "am I then to keep my horse?"

"It were a sin and shame indeed," said Heimberty, smiling, "to separate such a faithful steed from such a skillful rider. Ride on in God's name, and get safely to your people."

He then helped him to mount, and the Arab was on the point of uttering a few words of gratitude, when he suddenly exclaimed, "'The magic maiden!' and swift as the wind he flew over the dusty plain. Heimberty, however, turning round, saw close beside him in the now bright moonlight a shining figure, which he at once perceived to be Zelinda.

CHAPTER XI.

THE maiden looked fixedly at the young soldier, and seemed considering with what words to address him, while he, after his long search and now unexpected success, was equally at a loss. At last she said in Spanish: "Thou wonderful enigma, I have been witness of all that has

passed between thee and the Arab; and these affairs confuse my head like a whirlwind. Speak therefore plainly, that I may know whether thou art a madman or an angel?"

"I am neither, dear lady," replied Heimbert, with his wonted friendliness. "I am only a poor wanderer, who has just been putting into practice one of the commands of his Master, Jesus Christ."

"Sit down," said Zelinda, "and tell me of thy Master; he must be himself unprecedented to have such a servant. The night is cool and still, and at my side thou hast no cause to fear the dangers of the desert."

"Lady," replied Heimbert, smiling, "I am not of a fearful nature, and when I am speaking of my dear Saviour, my mind is perfectly free from all alarm."

Thus saying, they both sat down on the now cooled sand, and began a wondrous conversation, while the full moon shone upon them from the deep-blue heavens above like a magic lamp.

Heimbert's words, full of divine love, truth and simplicity, sank like soft sunbeams, gently and surely, into Zelinda's heart, driving away the mysterious magic power which dwelt there, and wrestling for the dominion of the noble territory of her soul. When morning began to dawn, she said: "Thou wouldst not be called an angel last evening, but thou art truly one. For what else are angels than messengers of the Most High God?"

"In that sense," rejoined Heimbert, "I am well satisfied with the name, for I certainly hope that I am the bearer of my Master's message. Yes, if He bestows on me further grace and strength, it may even be that you also may become my companion in the pious work."

"It is not impossible," said Zelinda thoughtfully. "Thou must, however, come with me to my island, and there thou shalt be regaled as is befitting such an ambassador, far

better than here on the desolate sand, with the miserable palm-wine that thou hast so laboriously obtained."

"Pardon me," replied Heimbert; "it is difficult to me to refuse the request of a lady, but on this occasion it can not be otherwise. In your island many glorious things have been conjured together by your forbidden art, and many lovely forms which the good God has created, have been transformed. These might dazzle my senses, and at last delude them. If you will, therefore, hear the best and purest things which I can relate to you, you must rather come out to me on this desert sand. The palm-wine and the dates of the Arab will suffice for me for many a day to come."

"You would do better to come with me," said Zelinda, shaking her head with somewhat of a scornful smile. "You were certainly neither born nor brought up to be a hermit, and there is nothing on my oasis so destructive as you imagine. What is there more than shrubs and flowers and beasts gathered together from different quarters of the world, perhaps a little strangely interwoven; each, that is to say, partaking of the nature of the other, in a similar manner to that which you must have seen in our Arabian carving! A moving flower, a bird growing on a branch, a fountain gleaming with fiery sparks, a singing twig—these are truly no hateful things?"

"He must avoid temptation who does not wish to be overcome by it," said Heimbert, very gravely. "I am for the desert. Will it please you to come out to visit me again?"

Zelinda looked down somewhat displeased. Then suddenly bending her head still lower, she replied: "Yes; toward evening I shall be here again." And turning away, she at once disappeared in the rising whirlwind of the desert.

CHAPTER XII.

WITH the evening twilight the lovely lady returned, and spent the night in converse with the pious youth, leaving him in the morning with her mind more humble, pure and devout; and thus matters went on for many days.

"Thy palm-wine and thy dates must be coming to an end," said Zelinda, one evening as she presented the youth with a flask of rich wine and some costly fruits.

He, however, gently put aside the gift, and said: "Noble lady, I would accept your gifts gladly, but I fear some of your magic arts may, perhaps, cleave to it. Or could you assure me to the contrary by Him whom you are now beginning to know?"

Zelinda cast down her eyes in silent confusion, and took her presents back. On the following evening, however, she brought similar gifts, and smiling confidently gave the desired assurance. Heimbert then partook of them without hesitation, and from henceforth the disciple carefully provided for the sustenance of her teacher in the wilderness.

And so, as the blessed knowledge of the truth sank more and more deeply into Zelinda's soul, so that she was often sitting till dawn before the youth, with cheeks glowing, and hair dishevelled, her eyes beaming with delight, and her hands folded, unable to withdraw herself from his words; he, on his part, endeavored to make her sensible at all times, that it was only Fadrique's love for her which had urged him, his friend, into this fatal desert, and that it was this same love that had thus become the means for the attainment of her highest spiritual good. She still well remembered the handsome and terrible captain, who

had stormed the height that he might clasp her in his arms; and she related to her friend how the same hero had afterward saved her in the burning library. Heimbert, too, had many pleasant things to tell of Fadrique, of his high knightly courage, of his grave and noble manners, and of his love to Zelinda, which in the night after the battle of Tunis was no longer concealed within his passionate breast, but was betrayed to the young German in a thousand unconscious expressions between sleeping and waking. Divine truth and the image of her loving hero both at once sunk deep within Zelinda's heart, and struck root there with tender but indestructible power. Heimbert's presence, and the almost adoring admiration with which his pupil regarded him, did not disturb these feelings, for from the first moment his appearance had something in it so pure and heavenly that no thoughts of earthly love intruded. When Heimbert was alone he would often smile happily within himself, saying in his own beloved German tongue: "It is, indeed, delightful that I am now able consciously to do the same service for Fadrique as he did for me, unconsciously, with his angelic sister." And then he would sing some German song of Clara's grace and beauty, the sound of which rang with strange sweetness through the desert, while it happily beguiled his solitary hours.

Once when Zelinda came in the evening twilight, gracefully bearing on her beautiful head a basket of provisions for Heimbert, he smiled at her, and shook his head, saying: "It is inconceivable to me, sweet maiden, why you ever gave yourself the trouble of coming to me out here in the desert. You can indeed no longer find pleasure in magic arts, since the spirit of truth and love dwells within you. If you would only transform the oasis into the natural form in which the good God created it, I would go there with you, and we should have far more time for holy converse."

"Sir," replied Zelinda, "you speak truly. I too have thought for some days of doings so, and the matter would have been already set on foot, but a strange visitor fetters my power. The Dervish whom you saw in Tunis is with me, and as in former times we have practiced many magic tricks with each other, he would like again to play the old game. He perceives the change in me, and on that account urges me all the more vehemently and dangerously."

"He must either be driven away or converted," said Heimbert, girding on his shoulder-belt more firmly, and taking up his shield from the ground. "Have the goodness, dear maiden," he continued, "to lead me to your enchanted isle."

"You avoided it so before," said the astonished Zelinda, "and it is still unchanged in its fantastic form."

"Formerly it would have been only inconsiderate curiosity to have ventured there," replied Heimbert. "You came too out here to me, and that was better for us both. But now the old enemy might lay snares for the ruin of all that the Lord has been working in you, and so it is a knightly duty to go. In God's name, then, to the work!"

And they hastened forward together through the ever-increasing darkness of the plain, on their way to the blooming island.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHARMING breeze began to cool the heated brows of the travelers; and the twinkling starlight revealed in the distance a grove waving to and fro with the gentle motion of the air. Heimbert cast his eyes to the ground and said: "Go before me, sweet maiden, and guide my path to the spot where I shall find this threatening Dervish. I

do not wish unnecessarily to see anything of these ensnaring enchantments."

Zelinda did as he desired, and the relation of the two was for a moment changed: the maiden had become the guide, and Heimbert, full of confidence, allowed himself to be led upon the unknown path. Branches were even now touching his cheeks, half-caressingly and playfully; wonderful birds, growing out of bushes, sang joyful songs; over the velvet turf, upon which Heimbert ever kept his eyes fixed, there glided gleaming serpents, of green and gold, with little golden crowns, and brilliant stones glittered on the mossy carpet. When the serpents touched the jewels, they gave forth a silvery sound. But Heimbert let the serpents creep and the gems sparkle, without troubling himself about them, intent alone on following the footsteps of his guide.

"We are there!" said she, with suppressed voice; and looking up, he saw a shining grotto of shells, within which he perceived a man asleep clad in golden scale-armor of the old Numidian fashion.

"Is that also a phantom, there yonder, in the golden scales?" inquired Heimbert, smiling; but Zelinda looked very grave, and replied:

"Oh, no! that is the Dervish himself, and his having put on this coat of mail, which has been rendered invulnerable by dragon's blood, is a proof that, by his magic, he has become aware of our intention."

"What does that signify?" said Heimbert. "He would have to know it at last." And he began at once to call out with a cheerful voice: "Wake up, old sir, wake up! Here is an acquaintance of yours, who has matters upon which he must speak to you."

And as the Dervish opened his large rolling eyes, everything in the magic grove began to move, the water began to dance and the branches to intertwine in wild emulation,

and at the same time, the precious stones and the shells and corals emitted strange and confusing melodies.

“Roll and turn, thunder and play, as you like!” exclaimed Heimbert, looking fixedly at the maze around him; “you shall not divert me from my own good path, and Almighty God has given me a good far-sounding soldier’s voice, which can make itself heard above all this tumult.” Then, turning to the Dervish, he said: “It appears, old man, that you already know everything which has passed between Zelinda and me. In case, however, that it is not so, I will tell you briefly that she is already as good as a Christian and that she is the betrothed of a noble Spanish knight. Place nothing in the way of her good intention; I advise you for your own sake. But still better for your own sake would it be, if you would become a Christian yourself. Discuss the matter with me, and first bid all this mad devilish show to cease, for our religion, dear sir, speaks of far too tender and divine things to be talked of with violence or with the loud voice necessary on the field of war.”

But the Dervish, burning with hatred to the Christians, had not waited to hear the knight’s last words, when he rushed at him with his drawn scimitar. Heimbert merely parried his thrust, saying: “Take care of yourself, sir! I have heard something of your weapons being charmed, but that will avail but little before my sword. It has been consecrated in holy places.”

The Dervish sprang wildly back before the sword, but equally wildly did he spring to the other side of his adversary, who only with difficulty caught the terrible cuts of his weapon upon his shield. Like a gold-scaled dragon the Mohammedan swung himself round his antagonist, with an agility which, with his long flowing white beard, was ghostly and horrible to witness. Heimbert was prepared to meet him on all sides, ever keeping a watchful

eye for some opening in the scales made by the violence of his movements. At last it happened as he desired; between the arm and breast on the left side, the dark garments of the Dervish became visible, and quick as lightning the German made a deadly thrust. The old man exclaimed aloud: "Allah! Allah!" and fell forward, fearful even in his fall, a senseless corpse.

"I pity him!" sighed Heimbart, leaning on his sword and looking down on his fallen foe. "He has fought nobly, and even in death he called upon his Allah, whom he looked upon as the true God. He must not lack honorable burial." He then dug a grave with the broad scimitar of his adversary, laid the corpse within it, covered it over with turf, and knelt on the spot in silent, heart-felt prayer for the soul of the departed.

CHAPTER XIV.

HEIMBERT rose from his pious duty, and his first glance fell on Zelinda, who stood smiling by his side, and his second, upon the wholly changed scene around. The rocky cavern and grotto had disappeared, the distorted forms of trees and beasts, half terrible and half charming as they were, had vanished also; a gentle grassy hill sloped down on every side of the point where he stood, toward the sandy waste; springs gushed out here and there in refreshing beauty; date-trees bent over the little paths; everything, indeed in the now opening day was full of sweet and simple peace.

"Thank God!" said Heimbart, turning to his companion, "you can now surely feel how infinitely more lovely, grand and beautiful is everything as our dear Father has created it, than it can be when transformed by the highest human art. The Heavenly Gardener has indeed permit-

ted us, His beloved children, in His abundant mercy, to help forward His gracious works, that we may thus become happier and better; but we must take care that we change nothing to suit our own rash willful fancies; else it is as if we were expelling ourselves a second time from Paradise."

"It shall not happen again," said Zelinda, humbly. "But may you in this solitary region, where we are not likely to meet with any priest of our faith, may you not bestow on me, as one born anew, the blessing of holy baptism?"

Heimbert, after some consideration, replied: "I hope I may do so. And if I am wrong, God will pardon me. It is surely done in the desire to bring to Him so worthy a soul as soon as possible."

So they walked together, silently praying, and full of smiling happiness, down to one of the pleasant springs of the oasis, and just as they reached the edge and prepared themselves for the holy work, the sun rose before them as if to confirm and strengthen their purpose, and the two beaming countenances looked at each other with joy and confidence. Heimbert had not thought of the Christian name he should bestow on his disciple, but as he scooped up the water, and the desert lay around him so solemn in the rosy glow of morning, he remembered the pious hermit Antony in his Egyptian solitude, and he baptized the lovely convert, Antonia.

They spent the day in holy conversation, and Antonia showed her friend a little cave in which she had concealed all sorts of store for her sustenance when she first dwelt on the oasis. "For," said she, "the good God is my witness, that I came hither only that I might, in solitude, become better acquainted with Him and His created works, without knowing at that time in the least of any magic expedients. Subsequently the Dervish came, tempting me, and the horrors of the desert joined in a fearful league

with his terrible power, and then by degrees followed all that alluring spirits showed me either in dreams or awake."

Heimbert had no scruple to take with him for the journey any of the wine and fruits that were still fit for use, and Antonia assured him that by the direct way, well known to her, they would reach the fruitful shore of this waterless ocean in a few days. So with the approach of evening coolness, they set out on their journey.

CHAPTER XV.

THE travelers had almost traversed the pathless plain, when one day they saw a figure wandering in the distance, for in the desolate Sahara every object is visible to the very horizon, if the whirlwind of dust does not conceal it from view. The wanderer seemed doubtful of his course, sometimes taking this, sometimes that direction, and Antonia's eastern falcon eye could discern that it was no Arab, but a man in knightly garb.

"Oh, dear sister," exclaimed Heimbert, full of anxious joy, "then it is our poor Fadrique, who is in search of thee. For pity's sake, let us hasten before he loses us and perhaps at last his own life also, in this immeasurable waste."

They strained every effort to reach the distant object, but as it was now midday and the sun shone burningly upon them, Antonia could not long endure this rapid progress; added to which, the fearful whirlwind soon arose, and the figure that had been scarcely visible before faded from their eyes, like some phantom of the mist in autumn.

With the rising moon, they began anew to hasten forward, calling loudly upon the unfortunate wanderer, and

fluttering white handkerchiefs tied to their walking-staffs, as signal flags, but it was all in vain. The object that had disappeared remained lost to view. Only a few giraffes sprang shyly past them, and the ostriches quickened their speed.

At length, as morning dawned, Antonia paused, and said: "Thou canst not leave me, brother, in this solitude, and I cannot go a single step further. God will protect the noble Fadrique. How could a father forsake such a model of knightly excellence?"

"The disciple shames the teacher," replied Heimbert, his sad face brightening into a smile. "We have done our part, and we may confidently hope that God will come to the aid of our failing powers and do what is necessary." As he spoke, he spread his mantle on the sand, that Antonia might rest more comfortably. Suddenly looking up, he exclaimed: "Oh, God! yonder lies a man, completely buried in the sand. Oh! that he may not be already dead!"

He immediately began to sprinkle wine, from the flask he carried, on the brow of the fainting traveler, and to chafe his temples with it.

The man at last slowly opened his eyes, and said: "I had hoped the morning dew would not again have fallen on me, but that unknown and unlamented I might have perished here in the desert, as must be the case in the end." So saying, he closed his eyes again, like one intoxicated with sleep, but Heimbert continued his restoratives unwearyingly, and at length the refreshed wanderer half raised himself from the sand with an exclamation of astonishment.

He looked from Heimbert to his companion, and from her again at Heimbert, and suddenly exclaimed, gnashing his teeth: "Ha, was it to be thus! I was not even to be allowed to die in the dull happiness of quiet solitude!

I was to be first doomed to see my rival's success and my sister's shame!" At the same time, he sprang to his feet, with a violent effort, and rushed forward upon Heimbert with drawn sword. But Heimbert moved neither sword nor arm, and merely said in a gentle voice: "Wearied out, as you now are, I cannot possibly fight with you; besides I must first place this lady in security."

Antonia, who had at first gazed with much emotion at the angry knights, now stepped suddenly between the two men, and cried out: "Oh, Fadrique, neither misery nor anger can utterly disfigure you. But what has my noble brother done to you?"

"Brother?" said Fadrique with astonishment.

"Or godfather, or confessor," interrupted Heimbert; "as you will. Only do not call her Zelinda, for her name is now Antonia; she is a Christian and waits to be your bride."

Fadrique stood fixed with surprise, but Heimbert's true-hearted words and Antonia's lovely blushes soon revealed the happy enigma to him. He sank down before the longed-for form with a sense of exquisite delight, and in the midst of the inhospitable desert, the flowers of love and gratitude and confidence sent their sweetness heavenward.

The excitement of this happy surprise at last gave way to bodily fatigue. Antonia, like some drooping blossom, stretched her fair form on the again burning sand, and slumbered under the protection of her lover and her chosen brother.

"Sleep also," said Heimbert softly to Fadrique; "you must have wandered about wildly and wearily, for exhaustion is pressing down your eyelids with leaden weight. I am quite fresh, and I will watch meanwhile."

"Ah, Heimbert," sighed the noble Castilian, "my sister is thine, thou messenger from heaven; that is an understood thing. But, now for our affair of honor!"

“Certainly,” said Heimbert, very gravely, “as soon as we are again in Spain, you must give me satisfaction for that over-hasty expression. Till then, however, I beg you not to mention it. An unfinished quarrel is no good subject for conversation.”

Fadrique laid himself sadly down to rest, overcome by long resisted sleep, and Heimbert knelt down with a glad heart, thanking the good God for having given him success, and for blessing him with a future full of joyful assurance.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE next day the three travelers reached the edge of the desert, and refreshed themselves for a week in an adjacent village, which, with its shady trees and green pastures, seemed like a little paradise in contrast to the joyless Sahara. Fadrique's condition, especially, made this rest necessary. He had never left the desert during the whole time, gaining his subsistence by fighting with wandering Arabs, and often almost exhausted by the utter want of all food and drink. At length he had become so thoroughly confused that the stars could no longer guide him, and he had been driven about, sadly and objectless, like the dust clouds of the desert.

Even now, at times, when he would fall asleep after the midday meal, and Antonia and Heimbert would watch his slumbers, like two smiling angels, he would suddenly start up, and gaze round him with a terrified air, and then, it was not till he had refreshed himself by looking at the two friendly faces, that he would sink back again into quiet repose. When questioned on the matter, after he was fully awake, he told them that in his wanderings, nothing had been more terrible to him than the de-

luding dreams which had transported him, sometimes to his own home, sometimes to the merry camp of his comrades, and sometimes into Zelinda's presence, and then leaving him doubly helpless and miserable in the horrible solitude as the delusion vanished. It was on this account that, even now, waking was fearful to him, and even in sleep a vague consciousness of his past sufferings would often disturb him. "You cannot imagine it," he added. "To be suddenly transported from well-known scenes into the boundless desert! And instead of the longed-for enchanting face of my beloved, to see an ugly camel's head stretched over me inquisitively with its long neck, starting back as I rose with still more ugly timidity!"

This, with all other painful consequences of his past miseries, soon wholly vanished from Fadrique's mind, and they cheerfully set out on their journey to Tunis. The consciousness, indeed, of his injustice to Heimbert and its unavoidable results, often lay like a cloud upon the noble Spaniard's brow, but it also softened the natural proud severity of his nature, and Antonia could cling the more tenderly and closely to him with her loving heart.

Tunis, which had been before so amazed at Zelinda's magic power and enthusiastic hostility against the Christians, now witnessed Antonia's solemn baptism in a newly-consecrated edifice, and soon after the three companions took ship with a favorable wind for Malaga.

CHAPTER XVII.

BESIDE the fountain where she had parted from Heimbert, Doña Clara was sitting one evening in deep thought. The guitar on her knees gave forth a few solitary chords, dreamily drawn from it, as it were, by her delicate hands, and at length forming themselves into a melody, while the

following words dropped softly from her partly opened lips:

“ Far away, 'fore Tunis ramparts,
Where the Christian army lies,
Paynim hosts are fiercely fighting
With Spanish troops and Spain's allies.
Who from blood-stained lilies there,
And death's roses pale and fair—
Who has borne the conqueror's prize ?

“ Ask Duke Alba, ask Duke Alba,
Which two knights their fame have proved.
One was my own valiant brother,
The other was my heart's beloved.
And I thought that I should crown them,
Doubly bright, with glory's prize,
And a widow's veil is falling
Doubly o'er my weeping eyes,
For the brave knights ne'er again,
Will be found 'mid living men.”

The music paused, and soft dew-drops fell from her heavenly eyes. Heimbart, who was concealed under the neighboring orange-trees, felt sympathetic tears rolling down his cheeks, and Fadrique, who had led him and Antonia there, could no longer delay the joy of meeting, but stepping forward with his two companions, he presented himself before his sister, like some angelic messenger.

Such moments of extreme and sudden delight, like heavenly blessings long expected and rarely vouchsafed, are better imagined by each after his own fashion, and it is doing but an ill service to recount all that this one did and that one said. Picture it therefore to yourself, dear reader, after your own fancy, as you are certainly far better able to do, if the two loving pairs in my story have become dear to you and you have grown intimate with them. If that, however, be not the case, what is the use

of wasting unnecessary words? For the benefit of those, who with heart-felt pleasure could have lingered over this meeting of the sister with her brother and her lover, I will proceed with increased confidence. Although Heimbert, casting a significant look at Fadrique, was on the point of retiring as soon as Antonia had been placed under Doña Clara's protection, the noble Spaniard would not permit him. He detained his companion in arms, with courteous and brotherly requests that he would remain till the evening repast, at which some relatives of the Mendez family joined the party, and in their presence Fadrique declared the brave Heimbert of Waldhausen to be Doña Clara's fiancé, sealing the betrothal with the most solemn words, so that it might remain indissoluble, whatever might afterward occur which should seem inimical to their union. The witnesses were somewhat astonished at these strange precautionary measures, but at Fadrique's desire they unhesitatingly gave their word that all should be carried out as he wished, and they did this the more unhesitatingly, as the Duke of Alba, who had just been in Malaga on some naval business, had filled the whole city with the praises of the two young captains.

As the richest wine was now passing round the table in the tall crystal goblets, Fadrique stepped behind Heimbert's chair, and whispered to him: "If it please you, señor—the moon is just risen and is shining as bright as day—I am ready to give you satisfaction." Heimbert nodded in assent, and the two youths quitted the hall, followed by the sweet salutations of the unsuspecting ladies.

As they passed through the beautiful garden, Fadrique said with a sigh: "We could have wandered here so happily together, but for my over-rashness!"

"Yes, indeed," said Heimbert, "but so it is, and it cannot be otherwise, if we would continue to look upon each other as a soldier and a nobleman."

“True!” replied Fadrique, and they hastened to reach a distant part of the garden, where the sound of their clashing swords could not reach the gay hall of betrothal they had left.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SECRET and inclosed, with blooming shrubs planted around, with not a sound to be heard of the merry company, nor of the animated streets of the city, with the full moon shining overhead and brightening the solemn circle with its clear brilliancy—such was the spot. The two captains unsheathed their gleaming swords, and stood opposite each other, ready for the encounter. But before they began the combat a nobler feeling drew them to each other’s arms; they lowered their weapons and embraced in the most fraternal manner. They then tore themselves away and the fearful contest began.

They were now no longer brothers-in-arms, no longer friends, no longer brothers-in-law, who directed their sharp steels against each other. With the most resolute boldness, but with the coolest collectedness, each fell upon his adversary, guarding his own breast at the same time. After a few hot and dangerous passes, the combatants were obliged to rest, and during the pause they regarded each other with increased love, each rejoicing to find his comrade so valiant and so honorable. And then the fatal strife began anew.

With his left hand Heimbart dashed aside Fadrique’s sword, which had been aimed at him with a thrust in tierce, sideward, but the keen edge had penetrated his leathern glove, and the red blood gushed out. “Hold!” cried Fadrique, and they searched for the wound, but soon perceiving that it was of no importance, and binding it up, they both began the combat with undiminished vigor.

It was not long before Heimbert's blade pierced Fadrique's right shoulder, and the German, feeling that he had wounded his opponent, now on his side called out to halt. At first Fadrique would not acknowledge to the injury, but soon the blood began to trickle down, and he was obliged to accept his friend's careful assistance. Still, this wound also appeared insignificant, the noble Spaniard still felt power to wield his sword, and again the deadly contest was renewed with knightly ardor.

Presently the garden gate clanked, and the sound of a horse's step was heard advancing through the shrubbery. Both combatants paused in their stern work, and turned toward the unwelcome disturber. The next moment, through the slender pines, a horseman was visible whose dress and bearing proclaimed him a warrior, and Fadrique, as master of the house, at once addressed him.

"Señor," said he, "why you come here, intruding into a strange garden, we will inquire at another time. For the present, I will only request you to leave us free from further interruption by immediately retiring, and to favor me with your name."

"Retire, I will not," replied the stranger, "but my name I will gladly tell you. I am the Duke of Alba." And as he spoke, by a movement of his charger, a bright moonbeam fell upon his pale thin face, the dwelling-place of all that was grand and worthy and terrible.

The two captains bowed low, and dropped their weapons.

"I ought to know you," continued Alba, looking at them with his sparkling eyes. "Yes, truly, I know you well; you are the two young heroes at the battle of Tunis. God be praised that two such brave warriors, whom I had given up for lost, are still alive; but tell me, what is this affair of honor that has turned your good swords against each other? For I hope you will not hesitate to declare to me the cause of your knightly contest."

They complied with the great duke's behest. Both the noble youths related the whole circumstances, from the evening previous to their embarkation up to the present moment, while Alba remained between them, in silent thought, almost motionless, like some equestrian statue.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE captains had already long finished their story, and the duke still remained silent and motionless, in deep reflection. At last he began to speak, and addressed them as follows:

“May God and His holy word help me, my young knights, when I say that I consider, after my best and most conscientious belief, that this affair of yours is now honorably at an end. Twice have you met each other in contest on account of those irritating words which escaped the lips of Don Fadrique Mendez; and indeed if the slight wounds you have hitherto received are not sufficient compensation for the angry expression, there is still your common fight before Tunis, and the rescue in the desert afforded by Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen to Don Fadrique Mendez, after he had gained his bride for him. From all this, I consider that the Knight of Waldhausen is entitled to pardon any offence of an adversary to whom he has shown himself so well inclined. Old Roman history tells us of two captains of the great Julius Cæsar, who settled a dispute and cemented a hearty friendship with each other, when engaged in the same bold fight, delivering each other in the midst of a Gallic army. I affirm, however, that you two have done more for each other; and therefore I declare your affair of honor to be settled, and at an end. Sheathe your swords, and embrace each other in my presence.”

Obedient to the command of their general, the young knights for the present sheathed their weapons; but anxious lest the slightest possible shadow should fall on their honor, they yet delayed the reconciling embrace.

The great Alba looked at them with somewhat of an indignant air, and said: "Do you then suppose, young knights, that I could wish to save the lives of two heroes at the expense of their honor? I would rather at once have struck you dead, both of you at once. But I see plainly that with such obstinate minds one must have recourse to other measures."

And dismounting from his horse, he fastened it to a tree, and then stepped forward between the two captains with a drawn sword in his right hand, crying out: "Whoever will deny in any wise that the quarrel between Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen and Don Fadrique Mendez is honorably and gloriously settled, must settle the matter at the peril of his life with the Duke of Alba; and should the present knights have any objection to raise to this, let them declare it. I stand here as champion for my own conviction."

The youths bowed submissively before the great umpire, and fell into each other's arms. The duke, however, embraced them both with hearty affection, which appeared all the more charming and refreshing, as it rarely burst forth from this stern character. Then he led the reconciled friends back to their betrothed, and when these, after the first joyful surprise was over at the presence of the honored general, started back at seeing drops of blood on the garments of the youths, the duke said, smiling: "Oh ye brides-elect of soldiers, you must not shrink from such jewels of honor. Your lovers could bring you no fairer wedding-gift."

The great Alba was not to be deprived of the pleasure of enacting the office of father to the two happy brides, and

the festival of their union was fixed for the following day. From that time forth they lived in undisturbed and joyful concord; and, though the Knight Heimbart was recalled soon afterward with his lovely consort to the bosom of his German Fatherland, he and Fadrique kept up the link between them by letters and messages; and even in after times, the descendants of the lord of Waldhausen boasted of their connection with the noble house of Mendez, while the latter have ever sacredly preserved the tradition of the brave and magnanimous Heimbart.

ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT.

A NARRATIVE.

ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT

CHAPTER I.

MANY years ago, on the Island of Fühnen, there lived a noble knight named Frode, the friend of the Skalds; thus entitled not only because he entertained all famous and noble bards in his beautiful castle, but because of his great efforts to discover those ancient songs, sayings, and legends existing in Runic or other characters. For this object he had even made some voyages to Iceland, and had fought many a bloody battle with the pirates; for he was a manly knight, striving to follow his ancestors not only in love of song, but to emulate them in military prowess. Although he was still scarcely beyond the prime of youth, all the other nobles of the island gladly followed his counsels and his banner; indeed his renown had already passed beyond the sea to the neighboring kingdom of Germany. This was the aim after which he aspired; for it would have broken his heart had he believed that some future day none of his songs would be sung and none of his legends related.

One bright autumn evening, this honor-loving knight was sitting in front of his castle, as he was wont to do, that he might look on all sides far over land and sea, and invite any passing travelers, as was his custom, to share his noble hospitality. But on this day he saw but little of all that he was accustomed to look on; for an old book, with artistic and beautifully-illuminated characters, which he had just received from a learned Icelfander, lay on his

knee. It was the legend of the fair Aslauga, the daughter of Sigurd, who at first concealing her noble birth had in mean attire kept goats among the common peasant-people, until the golden veil of her flowing hair attracted King Ragnar Lodbrog; and inviting her to become his queen, she was the ornament of the Danish throne until her death.

It seemed to the Knight Frode as if the gracious lady Aslauga arose actually before him; and his calm and valiant heart—subject, it is true, to all the fair sex, yet never until now touched by affection for any especial lady—was kindled with love for the beautiful daughter of Sigurd. “What does it matter,” he thought within himself, “that she has disappeared from earth for more than a hundred years? She sees, nevertheless, clearly into this heart of mine, and what more can a knight desire? She shall from henceforth be my lady-love and my helper in battle and in song.” And he forthwith made a song upon his new love, which ran as follows:

“ They ride and they search through each valley and height,
To seek for the maiden most beauteous and bright;
Through city and fortress they gallop so fleet,
To seek for the maiden most tender and sweet;
They ramble through paths never trodden before,
To seek for a maiden with wisdom and lore;
Oh! ride on, ye knights! for ye never will see,
What the pure light of song has revealed unto me.
I have found her, the sweetest, the wisest, the best,
Arousing the courage that dwells in my breast,
And though during life I ne'er union should find,
Still her face would in death be impressed on my mind;
And though she no longer on earth may abide,
The sweet link draws me ever in dreams to her side.
So good-night, fair world! and sweet love, good-day!
He who seeks in good earnest, success will repay.”

“ Much of that depends upon luck,” said a hollow voice

close beside the knight; and on looking round he saw a poor peasant-woman so closely wrapped in a gray mantle that he could not distinguish her features in the least. She looked over his shoulder on the book, and said with a deep sigh:

"I know that story well; and it fares no better with me than with the maiden of whom it tells."

Frode gazed at her with astonishment.

"Yes, indeed; yes, indeed!" she continued, nodding her head strangely. "I am the granddaughter of the mighty Rolf, to whom the most beautiful castles and forests and fields of this island belonged; thy castle and thy domains, Frode, belonged to him with the rest. We have now come to poverty; and because I am not as beautiful as Aslauga, there is no hope that I shall recover my possessions, and so I prefer to keep my poor face wholly concealed."

It seemed as if she were shedding hot tears under her veil. Frode was very much touched at this, and begged her for God's sake to let him know how he could help her, for that he was a descendant of the great old northern heroes, and perhaps something still better than they—namely, he was a good Christian.

"I almost think," she murmured forth from beneath her veiling mantle, "thou mayst be that same Frode whom they call the Good, and the friend of the Skalds, and of whose generosity and clemency such wonderful stories are told. If it be so, there may be help for me. Thou needst only give up to me the half of thy fields and pasture-lands, and I should be tolerably able to live as befits the granddaughter of the mighty Rolf."

Frode looked down thoughtfully, partly because she had asked for so very much, and partly because he was reflecting whether she could really be descended from the powerful Rolf. After a short silence, however, the mantled figure began again: "I have certainly been mi taken, and

thou art not the much-renowned and gentle-hearted Frode. He would surely not have hesitated so long about a trifle! But the utmost means shall be tried. See now! for the sake of the beautiful Aslauga, of whom thou hast just been reading and singing, for the sake of the daughter of the glorious Sigurd, grant my request!"

Then Frode started up passionately, exclaiming: "Your demand shall be granted!" and he extended his knightly hand in confirmation of his words. But he could not grasp the hand of the peasant-woman, although the dark form still remained close before him. A secret shudder began to pass through his limbs, while suddenly a light emanated from the figure, a golden light, enveloping her completely, and he felt as if Aslauga were before him, with the flowing veil of her golden hair, smiling on him kindly. Dazzled and enraptured, he sank on his knees. When he at length rose again he only saw an autumn mist spreading over the meadow, fringed at its edges with the last glow of evening, and then vanishing far over the waves.

The knight knew not what had happened to him. Deeply thoughtful, he returned to his apartments, feeling almost certain at one moment that he had beheld Aslauga, and at the next that some hobgoblin had appeared to him with its juggling tricks, spitefully mocking the service which he had vowed to his dead mistress. But henceforth, whenever he roamed through valley and forest and heath, or sailed on the sea, similar apparitions met him; once he found a lute lying in the wood and frightened a wolf away with it; and when the lute, untouched, emitted sounds, a beautiful little child rose from it, as had been the case with Aslauga herself. Then he saw goats clambering up the highest cliffs on the shore, and a golden figure tending them: then again a shining queen in a radiant bark would glide close by him, and salute him kindly; and

whenever he tried to approach any of these, they vanished into mist and cloud and vapor. Many a song could possibly be sung of all this. So much, however, he learned from it all, that the beautiful Lady Aslauga accepted his services, and that he had in deed and truth become her knight.

CHAPTER II.

MEANWHILE the winter had come and gone. In northern countries it never fails to bring with it, to those who understand and love it aright, many beautiful and significant images, with which many a child of man might be satisfied for all time, so far as earthly happiness is concerned. But now when the spring came with its opening buds and flowing waters, there came also welcome and bright tidings to Fühnen from the land of Germany.

There stood on the rich banks of the Maine, where it flows through the fertile land of Franconia, a castle of almost royal dimensions, the orphaned heiress of which was a relative of the Roman emperor. Her name was Hildegardis, and she was known far and wide as the most beautiful of maidens. On this account her imperial uncle desired that she should wed none but the most valiant knight. He followed, therefore, the example of many a noble lord in such a case, and proclaimed a tournament, at which the chief prize was to be the hand of the fair Hildegardis, unless the victor's heart were already given to a wedded wife or to a betrothed maiden. For no brave and noble knight was to be excluded from the contest, so that the trial of courage and strength might be all the greater. The renowned Frode now received tidings of this from his German brethren in arms, and he prepared himself to appear at the festival.

Before all things, he forged for himself a splendid suit of armor; for among all the armorers of the north, famous as the land is for its skill in the art, he was the most excellent. He worked the helmet out of pure gold, and fashioned it in such a manner that it looked like a mass of flowing hair, calling to mind Aslauga's golden tresses. On the breast-piece of his silver-plated armor he manufactured a golden image in half-relief, representing Aslauga with her veil of flowing hair, so that it might be known at the very beginning of the tournament that this knight, bearing the image of a lady on his breast, was not fighting for the hand of the fair Hildegardis, but only for the pleasure of the contest and for knightly fame.

Then he took a beautiful Danish steed from his stables, embarked carefully on board a vessel, and sailed prosperously to the opposite shore.

CHAPTER III.

IN one of those fair beech-woods constantly to be seen in the fertile German lands, Frode one day met with a young and courteous knight, of delicate form, who invited the noble Northman to partake of the meal which he had most comfortably prepared on the smooth turf under the agreeable shade of the trees. As the two knights sat happily together at their repast, they felt attracted toward each other, and were delighted when on rising from it, they found that their destination led them for the present along the same road. Not that they had come to this understanding by many words; for the young knight, whose name was Edwald, was of a silent nature, and would sit for hours quietly smiling, without once opening his lips to speak. But even in this quiet smile there lay a sweet amiable grace, and when now and then a simple but

thoughtful word crossed his lips, it seemed like something over and above, which merited thanks. It was the same with the little songs which he sang from time to time. They ceased almost as soon as they were begun, but there was a deep and graceful spirit in the short verses, whether breathed forth like a tender sigh or like a happy smile. And the noble Frode felt as if a younger brother were riding beside him, or even a gentle blooming son.

They remained together in this way for many days; it almost seemed as if their path were marked out for them in inseparable union, and much as they rejoiced at this, yet they looked sadly at each other at every fresh starting and at every cross-way, when no change in their common direction showed itself. Indeed it seemed at times as if Edwald's downcast eye was moistened by a tear.

It happened that in one of the hostelries at which they halted, they met an arrogant knight, of gigantic stature and powerful frame, with speech and manners betokening foreign birth. He appeared to have come from Bohemia. He looked with a strange smile at Frode, who had before him the ancient book of Aslauga's history, and was eagerly reading it. "You must surely be an ecclesiastical knight?" he said, inquiringly, and apparently on the point of beginning a whole train of unseemly jests. But Frode's negative answer was so seriously and calmly given that the Bohemian suddenly stopped, as one has often seen beasts who, having ventured to mock their king, the lion, became subdued before a single glance from his eye.

Subdued, however, the Bohemian certainly was not. On the contrary, he began to ridicule young Edwald on account of his delicate form and silence; and though at first Edwald bore this with great patience, when the stranger at length uttered an unbecoming expression, he rose up, buckled on his sword, and said, bowing gracefully: "I thank you, sir knight, for having given me an opportunity

of showing that I am neither a slothful nor an unpractised knight. For only thus is your behavior to be excused, which otherwise must be termed most unmannerly. Are you ready?"

So saying, he moved to the door; the Bohemian followed him with a scornful smile, and Frode was full of anxiety for his young and tender friend, whose honor was nevertheless far too dear to him to allow him in any way to interpose.

But it was soon evident that the Northman's fears were unnecessary. With equal power and dexterity, Edwald assailed his gigantic adversary, so that it almost looked like one of those combats of knights with wood monsters which we read of in old books. The issue too was of a similar character. Edwald rushed in upon the Bohemian, as he was preparing to give a decisive stroke, and threw him with the force of a wrestler to the ground. But he spared his conquered foe, courteously helping him to rise, and then mounted his horse. Soon after, he and Frode left the hostelry, and again continued their journey along the same road.

"From henceforth this gives me pleasure," said Frode, pointing with satisfaction to the common road they were taking. "I must confess to you, Eddy"—he had accustomed himself to call his young friend by the child-like name—"I must confess to you that whenever I thought hitherto that you might perhaps be going with me to the tournament which is to be held in honor of the beautiful Hildegardis, a sense of dread would come over my heart. I saw well your noble knightly courage, but I feared the power in your delicate limbs might not be adequate to it. Now I have learned to know you as a warrior who seeks his equal, and God be praised if we ever keep the same road, and bid each other welcome speedily in the lists!"

Edwald, however, looked at him very sadly, and said :

"What can my skill and my strength avail if I must use them against you, and that for the highest prize on earth, which after all only one of us can win? Ah! I have long foreboded with a heavy heart the sad tidings that you also were on your way to the tournament of the beautiful Hildegardis."

"Eddy," replied Frode, smiling, "you sweet, kindly child, do you not then see that I already bear on my breast-armor the image of a liege lady? My contest is only for the honor of victory, and not for your fair Hildegardis."

"*My fair Hildegardis!*" sighed Edwald. "That she is not, and never will be, or were she to be so—ah! Frode, it would, notwithstanding, pierce your heart. I know the Northland faith is as deeply rooted as your rocks, and is as hard to melt as their summits of snow, but no child of man may dare to imagine that he could look unscathed into the eyes of Hildegardis. The haughty, overhaughty maiden has so completely infatuated my calm and humble mind that I forget the gulf which lies between us, and pursue her; and I would rather perish than renounce the rash hope of winning that eagle spirit for my own."

"I will help you to do so, Eddy," replied Frode, still smiling. "If I only knew how this sovereign lady looks. She must be like the Valkyræ of our heathen ancestors, since so many brave warriors are vanquished by her." Edwald gravely drew a picture from beneath his armor, and held it out before him. Fixed, and as if enchanted, Frode gazed upon it; his cheeks glowed, his eyes sparkled, the smile disappeared from his countenance, as the sunlight passes from the meadows before the darkening storm.

"You see now, my noble comrade," whispered Edwald, "that for one of us two, or for both of us, the joy of life is gone."

"Not yet," replied Frode, with a powerful effort; "but hide your wonderful picture, and let us rest under this

shade. Your encounter must have somewhat exhausted you, and a strange weariness oppresses me like a leaden weight." They dismounted from their steeds, and stretched themselves on the ground.

CHAPTER IV.

THE noble Frode had no desire for sleep, he only wished undisturbed to wrestle powerfully with himself, in order, if possible, to drive from his mind the fearful beauty of Hildegardis. But it was as if this strange influence had become a part of his very life, and at length a restless, dreamy sleep actually overshadowed the exhausted knight. It appeared to him as if he was fighting with many knights, and Hildegardis was looking on smilingly from a richly-ornamented balcony, and just as he thought he had gained the victory a groan would rise from the bleeding Edwald lying beneath his horse's feet. Then again it seemed to him that Hildegardis was standing by his side in the church, and that he was about to be united to her in marriage; he knew well that he was not right, and with a powerful effort he repressed the "yes," which he was on the point of uttering, while at the same time his eyes were moistened with hot tears. He was at length awoke from these, and from still wilder and more confused visions, by the sound of Edwald's voice. He rose, and heard his companion say courteously in the direction of a neighboring copse: "Come back again, noble maiden. I will certainly help you, if I can, and I had no intention of frightening you away; only I did not wish you to wake my brother-in-arms from his slumbers." A gleam of gold shone through the bushes as the figure vanished.

"For heaven's sake, my faithful comrade," cried Frode, "with whom were you speaking, and whom have you seen by my side?"

"I cannot myself rightly understand it," said Edwald. "You had scarcely fallen asleep than a figure came out of the forest, wrapped in a large dark mantle; I took her at first for a peasant. She seated herself at your head, and, although I could see nothing of her face, I observed that she was very sad and was even shedding tears. I signed to her to go away, that she might not disturb you, and I was on the point of offering her a piece of gold, supposing that poverty was the cause of her deep sorrow. But my hand all at once seemed paralyzed, and a shudder passed through my mind, as if I had entertained such a purpose toward a queen. At the same time gleaming locks of gold waved here and there between the folds of mantle, and the copse began to be almost radiant with the reflection. 'Poor boy,' she then said, 'thou lovest indeed, and thou canst understand how a noble woman's heart burns with aching sorrow, when a knightly hero, who has vowed himself to be her own, turns his affections aside and is drawn away by lower aspirations, like a weak slave.' Upon this she rose and disappeared, sighing, into yonder copse. It almost seemed to me, Frode, as if she uttered your name."

"Yes, it was my name she uttered," replied Frode, "and not in vain has she done so. Aslauga, thy knight comes, and enters the lists, for thee and thy reward alone! At the same time, dear Eddy, we will win your haughty bride for you." So saying, he vaulted on his steed with all his old and proud joy; and when the fair Hildegardis, with her dazzling and bewildering charms, rose before him, he would say, smiling: "Aslauga!" and the sun of his inner life would again rise bright and cloudless.

CHAPTER V.

ON a balcony in her magnificent castle on the Maine, Hildegardis was wont to refresh herself in the cool evening by gazing on the fertile landscape; but still more readily did she gaze on the glittering arms, which were generally visible on many a distant road, along which knights were approaching singly or with a train of squires, all eagerly desiring to prove their courage and strength to win the high prize at the coming tournament. She was indeed a haughty and high-minded maiden—carrying this a little further perhaps than even became her dazzling beauty and her princely rank. As she was now looking smilingly at the glittering roads, a damsel in her train began the following song:

“ Oh! that I were
A little bird !
Through grove and pasture
Gayly heard.
Chanting forth in gladsome song,
All, all the thoughts that within me throng!

“ Oh ! could I bloom
Like some sweet flower,
Its perfume breathing
O'er mead and bower;
Giving forth in summer air
All, all that in secret gushes there.

“ But I am only
An honest knight
With high aim seeking
To do aright.
And in silence within my breast,
My all, my all is in stillness prest.”

“ Why do you sing that song, and just now too?” said

Hildegardis, trying to look scornful and proud as she spoke, with a deep and secret sorrow evident in her face.

"It came unawares into my mind," replied the girl, "when I looked upon the road by which the gentle Edwald, with his little graceful songs, first came to us, and then I sang this, which was one of his. But does it not seem to you, my mistress, and to you too, my companions, as if that were Edwald riding along the road there toward the castle?"

"Dreamer!" said Hildegardis, laughing scornfully, and yet she could not withdraw her eyes for some time from the knight, till at length, almost with an effort, she turned them on Frode, who was riding by his side, and said: "Yes, indeed, that is Edwald. But what do you see that is so grand in the silent, humble boy? Turn your gaze, my maidens, here, upon this majestic figure, if you wish to see a glorious knight." She was silent. A voice within her, as of prophecy, told her that the victor of the tournament was now riding into the court-yard, and for the first time in her life that she had feared the presence of a fellow being, she felt a humble and almost painful awe of the noble Northern knight.

At the evening meal, the two newly-arrived knights were placed opposite the royal Hildegardis. As Frode, after the Northern fashion, remained in full armor, the golden image of Aslauga gleamed brightly on the silver breastplate before the eyes of the haughty princess. She smiled scornfully, as if she were conscious that it depended on her will to expel the image of his lady from the breast and from the heart of the stranger knight. But suddenly a clear golden light passed through the hall, and Hildegardis, exclaiming that it lightened, covered her eyes with both her hands. Frode, however, looked at the dazzling gleam with a feeling of glad welcome. This increased Hildegardis' fear of him still more, although she at the

same time thought that this noblest and most wonderful of men could only be born for herself alone. Still she could not forbear, almost against her will, now and then casting a glance full of emotion and tenderness at the poor Edwald, who sat there silent and courteous, as though he were smiling pitifully at his own sorrow and his vain hopes.

When the two knights were alone in their sleeping apartment, Edwald sat for some time gazing silently out of the window into the dewy balmy night. Then he sang to his lute:

“ A hero wise and tried,
And a pious youth,
Linked with him in faith and truth,
Roamed together far and wide.

“ The hero by his deeds had won
Both happiness and rest,
The youth delight expressed,
And with hearty joy looked on.”

But Frode took the lute from him, and said: “No, Eddy, I will teach you another song. Listen!

“ There's a light in the hall as of dawning day;
’Tis the beautiful maid in her bright array.
She looks to the left and she looks to the right,
And suitors are watching her glance of light.
Shall it be he with the golden attire?
She turns away. He may not aspire.
Or he with the speech so thoughtful and wise?
She resteth on him neither ear nor eyes.
Perhaps ’tis the prince in his pageant vain?
Nay; different visions have filled her brain.
Tell me, who is it throughout the land,
Who is it has won the fair maiden's hand?
Silently bearing love's aching smart,
Sits the noble squire that hath gained her heart;
They are all deceived in their hoped-for lot,
And the one she has chosen imagines it not.”

Edwald thrilled with emotion. "As God wills," he said softly to himself, "but I think I could never conceive that such a thing could be."

"As God wills!" repeated Frode. The two friends embraced each other and soon fell happily asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME days after, Frode was sitting in a secluded bower in the castle garden, reading the ancient book of his beautiful mistress Aslauga. It happened just then that Hildegardis passed by. She paused for a few moments thoughtfully, and then said: "How is it, strange union that you are of knight and sage, how is it that you dispense so little from the deep treasures of your knowledge? I should, however, imagine that you must have many a pleasant story at your disposal; for instance that which you have now before you, for I see fine and bright pictures of beautiful maidens and noble heroes painted among the written characters."

"It is indeed," said Frode, "the most glorious and enchanting story in the world. But you have neither patience nor seriousness enough to listen to our wonderful legends of the north."

"Who tells you that?" replied Hildegardis, with some pride, which she was glad to assume toward Frode, when she could succeed in doing so; and, placing herself on a stone seat in front of him, she commanded him at once to read her something out of that beautiful book.

Frode began, and in the very effort which he made to change the old heroic Icelandic tongue into the south German dialect, his heart and mind glowed with increased fervor and excitement. When from time to time he looked up, he saw the beaming countenance of Hildegardis, spark-

ling with joy, wonder and interest, and the thought passed through his mind whether this after all might not be the chosen bride to whom Aslauga was guiding him.

Suddenly the characters began to grow strangely confused before his eyes; it seemed as if the pictures began to move, and he was obliged to stop. While he was fixing his eyes intently on the book in the hope of overcoming this mysterious confusion, he heard a sweet and well-known voice say: "Make a little room, fair lady. The story which the knight is reading to you relates to me, and I hear it gladly."

When Frode raised his eyes he saw Aslauga sitting in all the glory of her flowing golden hair on the seat beside Hildegardis. Filled with alarm, the maiden sank back fainting. Aslauga, with a solemn but graceful air, threatened the knight with her fair hand and vanished.

"What have I done to you?" said Hildegardis, when revived by his efforts; "what have I done to you, evil knight, that you should summon your Northern specters to my side, and frighten me to death with your terrible magic arts?"

"Lady," replied Frode, "may God help me, as I have not summoned hither the wonderful form which has just appeared to us. But I now know her will most clearly, and I commend you to God's protection." So saying, he walked thoughtfully out of the shrubbery.

Hildegardis fled timidly in another direction out of the gloomy shade and reached a wide and beautiful grass-plot, where Edwald was gathering flowers in the pleasant evening light, and smiling courteously as she approached, offered her a nosegay of pansies and narcissus.

CHAPTER VII.

THE day appointed for the tournament arrived, and a powerful duke, appointed by the Latin emperor as his representative, arranged everything in the most splendid and magnificent manner for the solemn festival. The place of combat was an extensive level ground, thickly strewn with the finest sand, so that horse and rider could find good footing on it, and it shone forth like a pure field of snow in the midst of the flowery plain. Rich hangings of silk from Arabia, curiously embroidered with Indian gold, hung with their various colors over the barriers inclosing the space, and floated from the high scaffoldings which had been erected for the ladies and princely spectators.

At the upper end, under a canopy of golden arches, artistically interlaced, was the post of the Lady Hildegardis. Green wreaths and garlands waved gracefully between the glittering pillars in the soft breezes of July, and the impatient rage of the multitude who thronged outside the lists was fixed expectantly on the spot at which the fairest maiden in Germany was to appear; and was only now and then turned in another direction by the stately entrance of the combatants. There was many a bright suit of armor, many a velvet and richly embroidered military coat, many a lofty waving plume to be seen! The splendid troop of knights moved to the places assigned them, greeting and speaking to each other, like some bed of flowers stirred by the breeze, but the flowers in it had grown to trees, and the white and yellow petals had been transformed to gold and silver, and the dew-drops to pearls and diamonds. For whatever was fair and costly, the noble knights had ingeniously and variously expended on the splendor of the day.

Many eyes were fixed on Frode, who, without scarf, plume or mantle, arrayed in his burnished silver coat of

mail with the golden image of Aslauga, and his well-wrought helmet of golden locks, shone forth through the crowd of knights like polished brass. Others again took especial pleasure in looking at the young Edwald, whose whole armor was covered with a mantle of white velvet, bordered with azure and silver, while his entire helmet was concealed by a magnificent plume of white feathers. There was something of almost feminine elegance in his attire, and yet the conscious power with which he restrained his wild and snow-white charger, proclaimed the manly strength of the knightly stripling.

Strangely contrasting with him, was a tall and almost gigantic figure, wearing a mantle of black glossy bear's skin, bordered by costly fur, but devoid of all ornament of shining metal; even the helmet was covered with black bear's skin, and instead of a plume, a mane of blood-red horse-hair hung profusely over it. Frode and Edwald knew the dark knight well; it was their uncourteous guest at the hostelry, and he also seemed to observe the two knights for he turned his steed impetuously round, and forced his way through the crowd of combatants, and after having spoken with an ugly sallow-faced woman at the barriers, he sprang with a wild leap over the lists, and swift as an arrow galloped out of sight. The old woman nodded after him in a friendly manner; the assembled people laughed, as at some strange carnival device, and Edwald and Frode had their own almost shuddering thoughts of the matter, though neither thought it well to impart them to the other.

The kettle-drums rolled, the trumpets sounded; and led by the old duke, Hildegardis richly attired, and rendered still more radiant by her own dazzling beauty, appeared under the arches of the golden bower, and bowed to the assembled company. Every knightly head bent low in return, and in almost all hearts the feeling rose that there

was no man on earth who could deserve a bride so queenly. When Frode bowed, it seemed to him as if the golden brightness of Aslauga's locks floated before him, and he felt proud and joyful that his mistress deemed him worthy to be so often reminded of her.

The tournament began. At first the knights fought with blunted swords and battle-axes, then they ran, lance in hand, man against man, and at last they divided into two equal parties, and a general encounter began, in which each was free to use sword or spear as he chose.

Frode and Edwald had gained the same advantage over their antagonists, as had seemed probable to them both, when computing each his own strength and that of his friend; and now a single trial with lances was to decide to whom the highest prize of victory was due. Before the contest began they rode slowly together into the middle of the course, consulting where they should each take their place. "Only keep your inspiring star ever in sight," said Frode, smiling, "the same gracious help will not be lacking to me." Edwald looked round astonished for the lady to whom his friend seemed to allude, and Frode continued: "I have been wrong in concealing anything from you, but after the tournament you shall know everything. Now lay aside all unnecessary thoughts; dear Eddy, and sit firmly on your saddle, for I tell you I shall run this course with all my might because not only my honor is at stake, but the far higher honor of my lady."

"Such is my purpose also," said Edwald, in a friendly tone. They shook hands and rode to their places.

At the sound of the trumpets running with the swiftness of an arrow, they met together; the lances shivered with a crash, the horses stumbled, the knights, immovable in their stirrups, pulled them up, and trotted back to their places.

When they prepared for a second course, Edwald's gray charger snorted wildly and shyly; Frode's powerful roan reared and pranced; it was evident that the two noble animals shrunk from a second hard encounter; but their riders held them fast with spur and bit, and at the repeated sound of the trumpets, they again dashed forward. Vigorous and obedient, Edwald, who by one deep, ardent gaze at the beauty of his mistress had impressed it anew upon his soul, exclaimed aloud at the moment of encounter, "Hildegardis!" and so powerfully did his lance strike his valiant adversary that Frode was completely thrown back on his steed, only with difficulty keeping his seat in his saddle and scarcely holding firm in his stirrups; while Edwald flew by unshaken, lowering his spear to salute Hildegardis as he passed her bower, and then amid the loud applause of the multitude galloping to his place, ready for a third trial. Ah, even Hildegardis, taken by surprise, had greeted him blushing and graciously, and he felt as if the intoxicating bliss of victory were already gained.

But this it was not yet; for the noble Frode, glowing with warlike shame, subdued again his wild steed and chastised it with the sharp spur for its share in his past mischance. At the same time he whispered softly: "Dear, beautiful lady, show thyself to me visibly; the honor of thy name is at stake."

To all the spectators it seemed as if a golden rosy-tinted summer-cloud were passing over the deep-blue sky, but Frode beheld the heavenly countenance of his lady; he felt himself as if fanned by her golden hair, and exclaiming "*Aslauga*," he rushed to the encounter with his adversary, and Edwald was hurled from his saddle far upon the dusty plain.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRODE remained for a time perfectly motionless, after the custom of knights, as if waiting to see whether any one would dispute the victory, and mounted on his mailed steed he looked almost like some lofty statue of brass. The multitude around stood in awe-struck surprise. But now when at length the shout of triumph burst forth, he made a sign with his hand, and all were again silent. Then springing lightly from the saddle, he hastened to the spot where the fallen Edwald was striving to rise. He pressed him warmly to his heart, led his snow-white steed up to him, and would not desist till the youth had allowed him to hold the stirrups while he mounted. Then he sprang upon his own steed, and rode by Edwald's side toward the golden bower of Hildegardis, where with lowered spear and raised vizor, he thus spoke:

"Fairest of all living women, I here bring you Edwald, your knightly lover, before whose lance and sword all the heroes of this tournament have been laid low, myself only excepted, and I can make no claim to the most glorious jewel that awaits the victor, since, as the image on my breast-plate shows, I already serve another mistress."

The duke was preparing to advance to the two warriors, to lead them up to the golden bower, but a glance from Hildegardis restrained him, and with cheeks glowing with anger, she replied:

"Then Sir Frode, my Danish knight, you serve your lady but ill, for it was just now that you openly called me the fairest of living women."

"I did so," replied Frode, with a courteous reverence, "because my fair mistress belongs to the dead."

A slight shudder passed through the assembly at these words, and through the heart of Hildegardis also, but soon

the anger of the maiden burst forth again, all the more vehemently as the most glorious and wonderful knight that she knew, had scorned her for the sake of one who was dead.

"I make known to all," she cried, with solemn earnestness, "that by the decree of my imperial uncle, this hand can belong to no vanquished knight, however noble and renowned he may otherwise have shown himself. As the victor at this tournament is bound to another service, this contest cannot affect me, and I depart hence as I came—a free and unbetrothed maiden."

The duke seemed about to interpose, but she turned haughtily from him, and left the golden bower. At the same time a wild and unexpected gust of wind tore down the green wreaths and garlands and carried them away in rustling confusion, and the people, displeased at the pride of Hildegardis, fancied they saw in this an omen of punishment, and dispersed, muttering a scornful approval.

CHAPTER IX.

THE two knights had returned to their apartments in deep silence. When they arrived there, Edwald unarmed himself at once, and placed all the pieces of his beautiful shining armor together, with a careful and loving precision, almost as if he were burying some dear beloved one. Then he signed to his squires to leave the chamber, and taking his lute on his arm, he sang the following song to its notes:

Whom dost thou lay in the grave
So soft and still?
It is my passionate,
My joyful will.
Sleep calm, thou dead, within thy cell!
My withered hope with thee must dwell."

"You will make me angry with your lute," said Frode, "unless you accustom it again to more joyful songs. It is too good to be a passing-bell, and you are too good to toll it. I tell you, my young hero, all will yet end gloriously."

Edwald looked at him for a while with an expression of wonder, then he answered kindly: "Nay, dear Frode, if it displeases you, I will certainly not sing again."

He touched, however, a few sad chords, which sounded infinitely sweet and tender. The Northern knight was deeply touched, and clasping him in his arms, he said:

"Dear Eddy, sing, and speak, and do, whatever pleases you, it shall always be pleasant to me also. But you may well believe it, when I foretell to you not without a spirit of presage, that your sorrow shall change; whether in death or life, I know not, but a great and overpowering joy awaits you."

Firmly and cheerfully, Edwald rose from his seat, seized powerfully his companion's arm, and walked with him through the flowering garden in the balmy evening air.

At this very hour, an old woman, muffled and concealed by wraps, was conducted secretly to the apartment of the Lady Hildegardis. The stranger, who was dark and strange to look at, had gathered around her for some time, by various juggling tricks, a part of the people returning home from the tournament, but they had all at last dispersed in wild terror. Before this had taken place, the tirewoman of Hildegardis had hastened to her mistress to entertain her with an account of the strange and merry tricks performed by the sallow-complexioned woman, and the maidens of Hildegardis' train, seeing their lady's agitation and wishing to banish her melancholy, bade the maid call the old woman hither. Hildegardis acceded, hoping thus to divert the attention of her waiting-women from herself, and to be able to contemplate more quietly and earnestly the various visions that passed before her mind.

The messenger found the place already deserted, and the old stranger alone in the midst, laughing immoderately. When questioned, she did not conceal that she had once assumed the form of an immense owl, and had declared to the spectators in a screeching tone that she was the devil, upon which they had all rushed screaming to their homes.

The tirewoman was frightened at the ugly jest, and yet she did not venture to ask Hildegardis for fresh orders, as she had observed her discontent. She satisfied herself therefore with impressing upon the old woman, with many threatenings and promises, that she should behave herself discreetly in the castle, and she then conducted her thither by private ways, so that none of the people whom she had frightened should observe her enter.

The old woman now stood before Hildegardis, and although she made a low and humble salutation she winked at her in a strangely intimate manner, as though there were some secret between them. The lady felt an involuntary shudder, and could not withdraw her gaze from the features of the ugly countenance, hateful as it was to her. The rest seemed in nowise to have satisfied the curiosity which had led them to desire to see the strange woman; for she performed only the most ordinary feats of jugglery, and recounted well-known tales, making even the tirewoman feel weary and indifferent, and quite ashamed of her recommendation. She stepped therefore away unnoticed, and some of the maidens followed her example, and as each withdrew the old crone twisted her mouth into a smile, and repeated her ugly confidential wink toward the lady. Hildegardis could not understand what attracted her in the jests and stories of the sallow old woman; but so it was; in all her life she had never listened so attentively to the words of any one. The old woman went on relating, and the night grew dark outside, but the

attendants who still remained with Hildegardis had fallen into a deep sleep, and had lighted none of the wax tapers in the apartment.

Presently, in the gloomy twilight, the dark old woman rose from the little seat, which had been her place hitherto, and, as if she now felt herself thoroughly at home, approached Hildegardis, half stupefied as she was with terror, placed herself beside her on the purple couch, and embracing her with hateful caresses, and with her long and withered arms, whispered a few words in her ear. It seemed to the lady as if she uttered the names of Frode and Edwald, and then she heard the sound of a flute, which in its clear and silvery cadences, seemed to lull her into slumber; it is true she could move her limbs, but only to follow the sounds, which floated round the ugly form of the old woman like a veil of silver net-work. And then the old woman glided from the room and Hildegardis followed her, passing among all her sleeping maidens and singing softly as she went: "Maidens, maidens, I wander by night."

Outside the castle stood the gigantic Bohemian knight with his squires and grooms. He placed a heavy bag of gold on the old crone's shoulders, so heavy that she sank to the ground, half whimpering, half laughing; he then lifted the dreaming Hildegardis on his charger, and trotted silently away with her into the ever deepening night.

CHAPTER X.

"YE noble knights and lords, all ye who yesterday gallantly contended for the prize of victory and for the hand of the beautiful Hildegardis! Up! up! saddle your horses and to the rescue! The fair Hildegardis is carried off!"

Such was the proclamation of many a herald through

castle and town, in the early morning of the following day, and on all sides might be seen clouds of dust from knights and noble squires, as they galloped along the roads, by which so lately in the evening light Hildegardis had proudly and silently watched the approach of her suitors.

Two of them, well known to us, still remained inseparably together, but they knew as little as others whether they were taking the right direction, for how and when the honored lady could have disappeared from her apartments remained a fearful and impenetrable secret to the whole castle.

Edwald and Frode rode on, so long as the sun moved over their heads, unwearied as he; now, however, when he sunk in the waters of the river, they thought to win the prize from him, and they once more spurred on their weary horses, but the noble animals staggered and panted, and their riders were obliged to give them some refreshment on a grassy meadow. Secure of bringing them back at the first call, the knights took off bit and curb, so that they might enjoy the pasture and the fresh waters of the Maine, while they themselves rested under the branches of a neighboring grove of alders.

Deep in the cool dark shade, there gleamed as it were a clear but sparkling light, checking Frode's words, who was just beginning to tell his friend the story of his knightly service to his noble mistress Aslauga; a story which had been withheld hitherto, first by Edwald's sadness, and afterward by his impatience to start on the journey. Ah! well did Frode know that gentle golden light! "Let us follow it, Eddy," said he, softly, "and we will leave the horses meanwhile to their pasture and refreshment."

Edwald silently obeyed the advice of his comrade in arms. A foreboding, half sweet, half fearful, seemed to

tell him that here lay the path, and indeed the only right path to Hildegardis. Once only, he said, in amazement: "I have never seen the evening glow shine so exquisitely upon the leaves." Frode smilingly shook his head, and they pursued in silence their secret path.

When they emerged on the other side of the alder-grove, upon the Maine, which by a sudden turn almost inclosed the grove, Edwald plainly saw that another glow than that of the evening light was shining on them, for the night had already spread dark and cloudy over the heavens, and the guiding gleam stood still on the banks of the river. The waves were lighted up by it, so that a little wooded island height was visible in the middle of the stream, and a boat on the nearest side to them was fast bound to a stake. As they approached, however, the knights saw still more; they perceived a troop of horsemen, of strange and foreign appearance, all sleeping, and in the midst of them, slumbering on cushions, lay a female form in white attire.

"Hildegardis!" murmured Edwald to himself, with a smile. And at the same time, drawing his sword, he held himself in readiness in case the robbers might awake, and signed to Frode to raise the sleeping lady and to convey her to a place of safety. But at the same moment something like an owl fluttered over the dark host, and all started up with clashing arms and hideous cries. A wild, unequal combat arose in the profound darkness, for the beaming light had disappeared; Frode and Edwald were separated in the crowd, and only at a distance heard each other's spirited war-cry; Hildegardis, startled from her magic slumber, and not knowing whether she were waking or dreaming, fled with bewildered senses, weeping bitterly, into the deepest shades of the alder-grove.

CHAPTER XI.

FRODE felt his arm growing weary, and the warm blood was trickling from two wounds in his shoulder. He wished to fall in such a manner that he might rise up with honor from his bloody grave before his noble mistress whom he served, and casting his shield behind him, he grasped his sword-hilt with both his hands, and rushed forward wildly, with a loud war-cry, against the terrified enemy. He heard some voices exclaim: "It is the fury of the northern champions which is upon him! It is the savage fury!" And the whole troop dispersed in alarm, while the exhausted hero remained alone in the darkness, wounded and suffering.

Presently Aslauga's golden hair gleamed again in the alder-shade, and Frode, wearily supporting himself on his sword, said: "I do not think I am wounded to death, but should it come to that, oh beloved mistress, wilt thou not surely appear to me in all thy loveliness and glory?" A gentle "Yes" was breathed against his cheek, and the golden light vanished.

But half fainting, Hildegardis now tottered forth from the copse, and said softly: "In there is the terrible and beautiful specter of the north, out there is the fight! Oh! whither shall I go?"

Then Frode stepped forward to soothe her, and was on the point of speaking many a word of comfort to the affrighted maiden, and to call for Edwald, when the return of the Bohemian warriors was announced by the clattering of their weapons and their wild shouts. Hastily, Frode led the maiden to the boat, pushed off from the shore, and rowed with all the effort his failing powers could make toward the island height, which he had before observed in the middle of the stream. But his pursuers had kindled

torches, and waving them sparkling to and fro, they soon perceived the boat; by their light they saw that the dreaded Danish knight was bleeding, and gained fresh courage for pursuit. Even before Frode had reached the shore of the island, he observed that a Bohemian was on the opposite side in another vessel, and soon after the greatest part of the enemy had embarked and were rowing toward him.

"Into the wood, fair maiden!" he whispered, as soon as he had helped Hildegardis to land. "Hide yourself there, while I endeavor to prevent the robbers from landing here?"

But, clinging to his arm, Hildegardis whispered in return: "Have I not seen that you are pale and bleeding? And do you wish that I should perish with terror in these solitary and gloomy mazes? Ah! and if your northern gold-haired specter were to appear again, and seat herself beside me! Think you perhaps I do not see her now, gleaming there between the bushes?"

"She gleams!" repeated Frode, and new strength and hope ran through every vein. He climbed the hill, following the beautiful glimmer of light, and though Hildegardis trembled at the sight, she readily went with her guide, whispering softly to him from time to time:

"Oh sir knight, my noble, wonderful knight, do not leave me here alone! It would be my death!"

The knight, kindly soothing her, stepped ever onward into the dells and the forest gloom, hearing already the sound of the Bohemians landing on the shore of the island.

Suddenly he stood before a cave, thickly concealed by bushes, and here the gleam disappeared. "Here, then!" he whispered, endeavoring to hold the branches asunder, to facilitate Hildegardis' entrance. She hesitated a moment and then said:

"Suppose you were to let the branches close again behind me, and I were to be left in the cave alone with specters! Frode! You will surely follow me—trembling, hunted child as I am? Will you not?" So saying, she stepped trustfully beneath the branches, and the knight, who had intended remaining as a guard without, followed her. Earnestly he listened through the stillness of the night, Hildegardis scarcely venturing to draw her breath. Presently the tread of an armed man was heard approaching, nearer and nearer, till at length it was close before the entrance of the cave. Frode endeavored in vain to free himself from the trembling maiden. The branches at the entrance were already crackling and breaking, and Frode exclaimed, with a sigh:

"Shall I then fall, like a lurking fugitive, entangled in a woman's garments? It is an evil end. But can I cast this half fainting maiden from me upon the dark hard earth? Perhaps into some abyss? No, come what will! thou, my lady Aslauga, thou knowest that I die in honor!"

"Frode! Hildegardis!" said a gentle, well-known voice at the entrance. And recognizing Edwald, Frode bore the lady toward him into the starlight, saying: "She will die of terror in this deep cavern. Is the enemy near?"

"Most of them are lying dead on the shore; or are swimming bleeding through the waves," replied Edwald. "Have no care on that point, and rest yourself. Are you wounded, dear Frode?"

He then proceeded to give his astonished hearers the short account of how in the darkness he had been pressed as a Bohemian into their vessel; that on landing, it had been easy to him to throw the robbers completely into confusion, thinking as they did that they were attacked by one of their own party, and considering themselves

bewitched. "They begun at last to fall on each other," said Edwald, as he ended his story, "and we have only now to wait till morning to conduct the lady home. For if any of the owl-squadron are still wandering about, they will, doubtless, hide themselves from the light of day."

During his relation he had been skillfully and carefully preparing a couch of moss and twigs for Hildegardis; and when the wearied maiden, with many a gentle word of gratitude, had sunk into a slumber, he began to bind up his friend's wounds as well as the darkness would allow.

During this serious task, with the tall dark trees rustling overheard, and the rippling stream in the distance, Frode, in a low voice, informed his brother-in-arms who was the mistress to whose service he was bound. Edwald listened very thoughtfully, but at last he said tenderly:

"Believe me, the noble Princess Aslauga would not reproach you, if you linked yourself in faithful love to this earthly beauty. Ah! even now, highly gifted and happy knight, you are, doubtless, a bright vision in the dreams of Hildegardis! I will not stand in your way with my vain wishes; it is plainly evident that she can never love me. I will, therefore, this very day set out for the war which so many brave knights of Germany are waging in heathen Prussia; and the black cross, which is their badge as warriors of the Church, I will bind to my beating heart as its best remedy. And you, dear Frode, take the fair hand which you have won in fight, and lead a life of surpassing happiness and joy."

"Edwald," said Frode, very gravely, "this is the first time that I ever heard a word from your lips which an honest knight could not put into effect. Do as you will toward the fair and haughty Hildegardis, but Aslauga remains my mistress, and I desire no other in life or in death."

The youth was silent at these stern words, and looked abashed; and both watched through the night in serious thought, without any further conversation between them.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE following morning, when the early sun shone brightly and smilingly over the fertile plains around the castle of Hildegardis, the watchman in his tower blew a joyful blast from his silver horn; for with his falcon eye he had distinguished far in the distance his beautiful mistress as she emerged from the forest between her two deliverers. And from castle and town and village there came forth many a rejoicing train to certify with their eyes the happy tidings.

Hildegardis turned to Edwald with eyes bedewed with tears, and said: "Were it not for you, young hero, all these might have sought long and vainly ere they had found me or had tracked the noble Frode, who undoubtedly would now be lying stiff and silent, a mangled corpse in that gloomy cavern."

Edwald bowed lowly, but persisted in his wonted silence; indeed it seemed as if an unusual grief repressed the pleasant smile which usually met every pleasant word with child-like sweetness.

The duke, the guardian of Hildegardis, had in the great joy of his heart prepared a splendid banquet, and had invited all the knights and ladies present to attend it. While Frode and Edwald, in brilliant magnificence, were ascending the steps close behind their rescued lady, Edwald said softly to his friend: "Noble steadfast hero, you can never love me more!" And when Frode looked at him with astonishment, he continued: "Thus it is when children take it into their head to counsel heroes, however

well they may mean it. I have grievously sinned against you, and against your noble mistress, the Lady Aslauga, still more."

"Because you would have gladly plucked the flower of your own garden to gladden mine!" said Frode; "no, you are now as ever my gentle brother-in-arms, dear Eddy, and you have perhaps become still dearer to me."

Edwald smiled again, silently happy, like a flower after the morning showers in May.

Hildegardis glanced mildly and kindly at him, and often conversed graciously with him, while, on the other hand, a reverential awe seemed since the previous day to separate her from Frode. But Edwald also was much altered. However modestly and gladly he welcomed the favor of his mistress, it yet seemed as if some barrier intervened between them, forbidding him to entertain even the most distant hope of successful love.

It happened that a noble count from the emperor's court was announced, who, being dispatched on an important mission, wished to pay his respects to the Lady Hildegardis as he passed by. She received him gladly, and as soon as the first salutations were over he said, looking at her and Edwald: "I know not, but perhaps my good fortune may have brought me hither to a very happy festivity. It would be most joyful tidings to the emperor, my master."

Hildegardis and Edwald looked beautiful in their blushing confusion; and the count, at once perceiving that he had been overhasty, bowed low to the young knight and said: "Pardon me, noble Duke Edwald, for my indiscretion, but I know the wish of my sovereign; and the hope of seeing it already accomplished prompted my tongue to speak."

All eyes were turned inquiringly upon the young hero, who answered with graceful embarrassment: "It is true; the emperor, during my last visit to his court, raised me

in his infinite favor to the rank of duke. It was my good fortune that in an encounter some of the enemy's horse who had dared to attack the sacred person of the emperor fled at my approach."

The count then, at the request of Hildegardis, related the heroic deed in detail, and it appeared that Edwald had not only saved the emperor from the most threatening danger, but also, with the cool and bold mind of a general, had soon after gained the decisive victory which had terminated the war.

Surprise at first sealed every lip, and even before congratulations could be expressed, Hildegardis turned toward Edwald and said in a low tone which, however, in the silence, was audible to all: "The noble count has expressed the wish of my imperial uncle, and I will conceal it no longer, that the wish of my own heart is the same—I am Duke Edwald's bride." So saying, she held out to him her fair right hand, and all present only waited for him to take it before they burst forth in a loud shout of congratulation. But Edwald did not do as they had expected; sinking down on one knee before his mistress, he said: "God forbid that the honorable Hildegardis should ever retract a word solemnly spoken before knights and dames. To no vanquished knight, you said, might the hand of the emperor's niece belong, and there stands Frode, the noble Danish knight, my conqueror."

Hildegardis turned tremblingly away, with a slight blush, and hid her eyes; and as Edwald rose, it seemed as if a tear were trickling down his cheek.

Clattering in his armor, Frode strode into the middle of the hall, exclaiming: "I declare my late victory over Duke Edwald to have been the mere chance of fortune, and I challenge the knightly hero to meet me to-morrow once again in the lists." And as he spoke he threw his brazen gauntlet ringing on the floor.

But Edwald moved not to take it up. A glow of crimson anger overspread his cheeks, and his eyes sparkled with indignation, so that his friend would scarcely have recognized him. After a pause of some minutes he said: "Noble knight, Sir Frode, if I have ever offended you, we are now even. How dare you, a hero gloriously wounded with two sword-strokes, challenge a sound man to meet you in the lists to-morrow unless you despise him?"

"Pardon me, duke," replied Frode, somewhat abashed but very cheerfully. "I have spoken too boldly. I will summon you when I am completely cured."

Edwald then took up the gauntlet gladly, and again knelt before Hildegardis, who, with averted face gave him her hand to kiss; then taking the arm of his noble Danish friend he walked out of the hall.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Frode's wounds were healing, Edwald would wander sometimes, when everything was wrapt in the deep calm of evening, on the flowery terraces under the windows of Hildegardis, singing graceful little songs. Among others he sang the following:

"Heal fast, ye hero-wounds!
Be strong once more, brave knight!
Oh tarry not too long!
To meet me in the fight!"

But that one, which the maidens in the castle liked best to sing after him, was this:

"I would that I were lying,
By some hero slain!
I would that love's soft sighing
Called me to life again!
I would I were possessing
Imperial wealth and power!"

“ I would my steps were pressing
In some wild woodland bower!
I would I were an anchorite,
Or a squire in royal train;
Or that I were that honored knight
Whose suit were not in vain!”

It was perhaps the longest song which Edwald had ever sung in all his life.

At this time it happened that a man who was considered very wise, and who filled the office of secretary with the old duke, the guardian of Hildegardis, went to the two knightly friends, to make, as he said, a humble proposal to them.

The matter, briefly stated, was this—that as Frode could not possibly gain any advantage from the victory, he might in the approaching combat contrive to fall from his horse, and in this way secure the lady for his comrade, at the same time fulfilling the wish of his imperial majesty which would hereafter be sure to be gratefully acknowledged in various ways.

The two friends at first laughed heartily at this proposal, and then Frode turned gravely toward the secretary and said: “ My friend, if the old duke knew of thy folly, he would, it is to be hoped, drive thee from his service, for thus talking of the emperor. This one little saying you had better learn by heart:

“ When first the knight his saddle prest,
Then there was no more talk of jest;
When lance meets lance in deadly fray,
The world has little left to say.
And the fellow who ventures to interpose,
The chances are he will lose his nose.”

“ Good-night, dear sir; and you may rest assured that when Edwald and I meet each other, it will be with all our heart and strength.”

The secretary hastened out of the room, and even on the next morning looked unusually pale.

CHAPTER XIV.

Soon after this, Frode had recovered from his wounds; the course was prepared as before, only it was crowded by a still greater number of spectators; and in the freshness of a dewy morning the two heroes rode solemnly together to the combat.

"Beloved Edwald," said Frode softly as they went along, "compose yourself beforehand, for also to-day the victory cannot be yours. On yonder rose-colored cloud Aslauga rests."

"It may be so," replied Edwald, quietly smiling; "but under that labyrinth of golden arches shines Hildegardis, and to-day she has not been waited for."

The knights took their places, the trumpets sounded, and the course began. Frode's prophecy seemed about to be fulfilled, for Edwald staggered so beneath his stroke that he dropped his bridle; but seizing the mane with both hands he recovered his balance, while his wild and snow-white steed bore him across the course at a furious pace. Hildegardis, too, seemed to shrink at this sight, but the youth at length reined in his horse, and the second course was begun.

Frode shot like lightning across the plain, and the success of the young duke seemed hopeless. But in the encounter the horse of the bold Dane reared and plunged, the rider staggered, his thrust passed harmless by, and both steed and knight fell clashing over each other before Edwald's steadfast spear, and lay as if stunned upon the field.

Edwald now did as Frode had done before. In accord-

ance with chivalric custom he remained for a while upon the spot, as if waiting to see if any adversary would dispute his victory; then he sprang from his horse and flew to the help of his fallen friend.

Eagerly he labored to draw him from the weight of his horse, and Frode, soon reviving, aided in extricating himself, and raised his charger also. Then he lifted up his visor and smiled kindly at his conqueror, though his face was deadly pale. The victor bowed humbly, almost bashfully, and said: "You, my knight, overthrown! And by me! I do not understand it."

"It was her own will," answered Frode, smiling. "Come up now to your lovely bride."

Loudly shouted the multitude around, the dames and the knights bowed low as the old duke led forward the handsome bridal pair, and they both at his bidding embraced each other, with many blushes, beneath the leafy garlands of the golden bower.

That very day they were solemnly united in the castle chapel, at Frode's urgent request. A journey into a far distant land, he said, lay before him, and he wished to be present at the marriage of his friend before he left.

CHAPTER XV.

THE torches were burning brightly in the vaulted halls of the castle; Hildegardis had just left her husband's arm to begin a dance of honor with the aged duke, when Edwald beckoned to his knightly comrade, and both passed out together into the moonlit castle-garden.

"Ah, Frode, my noble, glorious hero," exclaimed Edwald, after a short silence, "were you only as happy as I am! But your eyes rest seriously and thoughtfully on the ground, or glow with an almost impatient glance upward.

It would be terrible if you really cherished a secret wish in your heart to wed Hildegardis, and I, a foolish child, favored so mysteriously, stood in your way!"

"Be quiet, Eddy," said the Danish hero, with a smile. "On my knightly word, my thoughts and longings concern not your fair Hildegardis. Brighter than ever, Aslauga's golden image shines within my heart. Listen to me, and I will tell you:

"Just as we met together in the course—oh! that I had words to express to you all that happened!—I was enraptured, encircled and dazzled by Aslauga's golden hair, in which I suddenly floated—my noble steed too must have seen the apparition, for I felt him start and rear under me. I saw you no more, I saw the world no more; Aslauga's angelic face was alone quite close before me, smiling and blooming like a flower in a sea of sunlight in which it was bathed. My senses failed me. It was only when you extricated me from beneath my horse that I returned to consciousness, and I knew to my great joy that her own gracious will had struck me to the ground. I felt, however, a strange weariness, far more than the mere consequence of my fall, and at the same time it seemed to me as if very shortly my mistress would send me on a distant mission. I hastened to repose myself in my chamber and a deep sleep at once overcame me. Then Aslauga appeared to me in a dream, royally adorned as ever, placed herself at the head of my couch, and said: 'Hasten to attire thyself in all the splendor of thy silver armor, for thou art not only a wedding-guest, thou art also the——'

"And before she had finished speaking, my dream melted, as it were, away, and I felt urgent to follow her gentle command, and was full of joy. But now, in the midst of the festival itself, I seem to myself lonely, as I have never felt in my life, and I cannot cease thinking what the unfinished words of my mistress really intended to announce."

"You are of a far nobler mind, Frode, than I," said Edwald, after a short silence; "and I cannot, therefore, soar with you into your joys. Tell me, though, has it never awakened a deep pang within you, that you serve a mistress so distant from you—alas! a mistress for the most part ever invisible to you?"

"No, Edwald; not so," replied Frode, with a countenance radiant with happiness. "I know well that she does not disdain my service, and I am at times vouchsafed a vision of her. Oh! I am indeed a happy knight and minstrel!"

"And yet your silence to-day, your sad longings?"

"Not sad, dear Eddy; only so fervent, so deep within my heart, and so strangely mysterious. But this, like everything I feel, springs from these very words and commands of Aslauga; how can it then be anything but beautiful and tending to a high and glorious aim?"

A squire, who had been despatched to them, announced that they were awaiting the princely bridegroom for the torch-dance; and Edwald begged his friend, as they went, to take his place in the solemn dance immediately behind himself and Hildegardis. Frode assented with a friendly nod.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE horns and hautboys had already given forth their solemn sound; Edwald hastened to offer his hand to his fair bride, and as he advanced with her into the center of the splendid hall, Frode invited a noble lady who stood next him, but without further observing her, to be his partner in the torch-dance, and he led her to the next place behind the wedded pair.

But how did he feel when a light began to beam from

his companion, a light so bright that his own torch was pale beside it! He scarcely ventured in sweet and trembling hope to cast a glance at the lady, and when he at length did so, his boldest desires and longing were fulfilled. Adorned with a glittering bridal crown set with emeralds, Aslauga danced in solemn loveliness by his side, and beamed on him from the sunny light of her golden hair, with a heavenly and enchanting air.

The astonished spectators could not turn their eyes from the mysterious pair—the hero in his bright silver armor, with his torch uplifted, moving with a measured step, and with a serious and yet joyful mien, as though he were engaged in some deep and secret ceremony; the lady by his side, floating rather than dancing, emitting light from her golden hair, so that one might almost have imagined that day was shining in the night, and when an eye could reach her face through all the rich glimmer that surrounded it, the unspeakably sweet smile upon the features delighted heart and sense.

Toward the end of the dance she bowed graciously to Frode, and whispered to him with an air of confidence, and with the last sound of the horns and hautboys she had vanished.

None of the most curious of the company had the courage to question the Danish knight about his partner, and Hildegardis did not seem to have perceived the stranger's presence. But shortly before the close of the festival Edwald approached his friend, and asked in a low tone: "Was it——"

"Yes, dear youth," answered Frode, "your wedding-dance has been brightened by the presence of the noblest beauty to be seen in any land. Ah! and if I have rightly heard her whispers, you will never more see me stand sighing and gazing on the ground. But I scarcely venture to hope it. Now, good-night, dear Eddy, good-night. As soon as I may, you shall hear everything."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE light and happy dreams of morning were still floating before Edwald, and it seemed to him as if a bright sunbeam were playing round his head. He remembered Aslauga; but it was not she, it was Frode, whose helmet of golden locks now glittered no less brightly than his lady's flowing hair. "Ah!" thought Edwald in his dream, "how beautiful has my dear comrade-in-arms become!"

And Frode said to him: "I will sing something to you, Eddy; softly, so softly, that it may not awaken Hildegardis. Listen to me:

"She is come, bright as the day,
There, where the knight in slumber lay.
Holding in her snow-white hand,
A plaything, like a moonlit band;
And round them both as a circling zone,
She twined it, singing: 'we are one.'
The world lay dark and dreary round,
As she raised him lifeless from the ground.
And he stood in a garden, fair to the eyes,
And the angels called it Paradise."

"You have never sung so sweetly in your life;" said the half-dreaming youth.

"That may well be, Eddy," said Frode, with a smile, and disappeared. But Edwald went on dreaming, and many other visions passed before him, all of a very pleasing kind, although he could not recall them to mind when he opened his eyes, smilingly, on the following morning. Frode alone and his wonderful song stood clearly in his memory. He now well knew that his friend was dead, but he could feel no sorrow, conscious as he was that the pure spirit of the hero and minstrel could alone find its true joy in the garden of Paradise, and in blissful

intercourse with the noble spirits of antiquity. Softly he glided from the slumbering Hildegardis to the chamber of the dead. He lay upon his bed of rest, almost as beautiful as he had appeared in the dream, and the golden helmet on his head was entwined with a wonderfully shining lock of hair. Then Edwald made a fair and sheltered grave in consecrated ground, summoned the chaplain of the castle, and with his help laid his beloved Frode within it.

He came back, just as Hildegardis awoke, and when, astonished at his chastened joy, she humbly asked him where he had been so early, he replied smilingly: "I have just buried my dearly-loved Frode, who, this very night, has gone to his golden-haired mistress."

Then he told Hildegardis the whole story of Aslauga's knight, and he lived on in calm undisturbed happiness, though for a time somewhat more silent than before.

He was often to be found sitting on the grave of his friend, singing the following song to his lute:

"Aslauga's faithful knight!
How dance the glad throng,
To celestial song,
In groves that are golden bright!

"Send to us from on high,
Vouchsafe us from the sky,
Many a heavenly gleam,
Many a blessed dream,
Aslauga's faithful knight!"

SINTRAM AND HIS COMPANIONS.

A NORTHERN ROMANCE

AFTER

ALBERT DÜRER.

SINTRAM AND HIS COMPANIONS.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE high castle of Drontheim many northern knights were assembled to hold council for the welfare of the realm, and were now carousing merrily together far into the night, around the huge stone table in the vaulted and echoing hall.

The rising storm drove the snow wildly against the rattling windows, all of the oaken panels of the doors groaned, the massive locks shook, and the castle-clock, after much preliminary noise, struck the hour of one.

Just then, a boy, pale as death, with disordered hair and closed eyes, rushed into the hall uttering a scream of terror. He stopped behind the ornamented seat of the mighty Knight Biörn, clung to the glittering hero with both his hands, and cried with a piercing voice: "Knight and Father! Father and Knight! Death and some one else are close behind me!"

A fearful stillness lay freezingly over the whole assembly, save that the boy continued screaming the terrible words.

But an old trooper, one of the Knight Biörn's numerous retainers, surnamed Rolf the Good, stepped forth toward the wailing child, took him in his arms, and sang as if in prayer:

" Help, Father mine,
This child of Thine!"

The boy, as if dreaming, at once loosened his hold of the

great Knight Biörn, and Rolf the Good bore him like a feather out of the hall, though the hot tears were still falling, and there was a continued gentle murmur.

The lords and knights looked at each other in amazement.

Presently the mighty Biörn, with a wild and fierce laugh, said: "Do not allow yourselves to be misled by the fancies of a boy. He is my only son, and he has gone on in this way since he was five years old; he is now twelve, I am well accustomed to it therefore, though at first it made me also rather uneasy. It only happens once every year, and always about this time. But pardon me, for having expended so many words on my poor Sintram, and start some subject more worthy of our discourse."

There was again a silence. Then here and there a single voice began falteringly and softly to renew the broken thread of conversation, but without success. Two of the youngest and merriest knights began a roundelay; but the storm howled and whistled and raged so strangely that this also was soon interrupted.

Then they all sat silent and almost motionless in the lofty hall; the lamp flickered dimly from the vaulted roof; the whole knightly assembly were like pale lifeless images, dressed up in gigantic armor.

Then the chaplain of the castle of Drontheim arose—he was the only ecclesiastic in the whole knightly circle—and said:

"Dear Sir Biörn, once again our attention has been directed to you and your son in a wonderful manner, decreed most surely by God. You see that we cannot divert our minds from the circumstance, and you would do better to tell us exactly what you know of your boy's wonderful condition. Possibly the solemn account, which I anticipate, might be salutary for this somewhat wild assembly."

Knight Biörn looked with displeasure at the priest, and replied: "Sir chaplain, you have more share in the history than either you or I could desire. Let us not impose so sad a tale on these merry Norwegian warriors."

The chaplain, however, approached nearer the knight, and with an air of great firmness, but in a gentle tone, said: "Dear sir, hitherto it rested with you, and with you alone, to relate or not to relate the story; now, since you have so strangely alluded to my share in your son's misfortune, I must positively demand of you that you will inform us word for word how it has all happened. My honor requires it, and this you will see as plainly as I do myself."

Sternly but assentingly, Biörn bowed his haughty head, and began the following narration:

"It is seven years ago, since I was keeping the Christmas festival with all my assembled retainers. There are many ancient venerable customs, which have been transmitted to us as a heritage from our great ancestors; as, for instance, that of placing on the board a beautiful golden boar, and making all sorts of chivalric and merry promises upon it. The chaplain here, who at that time used frequently to visit me, was never a great friend to these remnants of the old heathen ages. Such men as he were not held in high importance in those olden times."

"My excellent predecessors," interrupted the chaplain, "adhered to God more than to the world, and by God they were held in esteem. In this manner they converted your ancestors, and if I can be of similar service to you, even your ridicule will not affect my heart."

With a look still darker, and an air of angry dread, the knight continued: "Yes, yes; promises resting on some invisible Power, and threats too! And so we suffer to be taken from us the good which is visible and certain! At that time, ah, then indeed, I still had such! Strange!

Sometimes it comes before me as if it were centuries ago, and as if I were some old man who had outlived everything, so fearfully is everything changed. But now I bethink me, the greater part of this noble Round Table have visited me in my days of happiness, and have known Verena, my lovely wife——”

He pressed his hands before his face, and it seemed as though he wept. The storm had ceased; soft moonbeams shone through the windows, and played as if with kindly and caressing touch around Biörn's wild figure.

Suddenly he rose, so that his armor clattered fearfully, and he cried out with a thundering voice: “Shall I turn monk perhaps; as she has become a nun? No, crafty chaplain; your webs are too thin to catch flies of my sort!”

“I know nothing of webs,” said the reverend man. “Honestly and openly I have placed Heaven and Hell before you during six years, and you consented to the step which the pious Verena took. But how all this is connected with your son's sufferings, I do not know, and I wait your narration.”

“You may wait long enough!” said Biörn, with an angry laugh. “Sooner shall——”

“Swear not!” said the chaplain, in a tone of command, and with eyes that flashed fearfully.

“Hurra!” exclaimed Biörn, in wild affright. “Hurra! Death and his companions are loose!” And he dashed out of the chamber in a fury, down the steps; and outside the rough and terrible notes of his horn gave a summons to his retainers, who soon afterward were heard galloping away over the frozen court-yard.

The knights dispersed silently and almost fearfully; and the chaplain remained alone at the huge stone table, praying.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER some time Rolf the Good returned slowly and softly, and stood with amazement at finding the hall deserted. In the remote chamber, in which he had been quieting the child, he had heard nothing of the knight's wild departure. The chaplain informed him of what had occurred, and then said:

"But, dear Rolf, I should like to ask you about the strange words with which you again lulled poor Sintram to rest. They sounded so pious, and no doubt were so, and yet I did not understand them:

" 'I can, and yet cannot believe.' "

"Reverend sir," replied Rolf. "From my very childhood, I remember that none of the beautiful stories in the gospel has taken such powerful hold upon me, as that one in which the disciples were not able to heal the child possessed with the devil, and the Saviour at length came down from the mountain where he had been transfigured, and tore asunder the bonds wherewith the evil spirit had held the happy child fast bound. It always seemed to me as if I must have known and cared for that boy, and have been his play-fellow in days of health. And when I grew into years, the distress of the father on account of his lunatic son lay heavy on my heart. All this must have been a sort of foreboding of our poor Lord Sintram, whom I love like my own child, and now my heart oftentimes gives vent to the words of the weeping father in the Gospel: 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief;' and something similar I may have sung or prayed to-day in my anxiety. Dear reverend sir, all seems dark to my mind sometimes, when I consider how one fearful imprecation of the father can so cleave to that poor child, but, thank God! my faith and my hope are fixed above."

"Dear Rolf," said the holy man, "I can only partly understand all that you say of the poor Sintram, for I am ignorant when and how this affliction befell him. If your lips are bound by no oath, nor solemn word, tell me all that is connected with it."

"Gladly," replied Rolf. "I have long desired to do so. But you have been almost entirely separated from us. Just now I dare not leave my sleeping young master any longer alone, and to-morrow, as early as possible, I must take him to his father. Will you, perhaps, dear sir, come with me to our poor Sintram?"

The chaplain at once took up the small lamp which Rolf had brought with him, and they went together through the long vaulted passage.

In the small remote chamber they found the poor boy fast asleep. The light of the lamp fell strangely on his pallid features. The chaplain stood for some time gazing at him thoughtfully, and at last he said:

"It is true, from his birth he has had sharp and strongly marked features, but now they look almost fearfully so for such a child. And yet one must have a kindly feeling toward him, as he lies sleeping there so soundly, whether one will or not."

"Quite so, reverend sir," replied Rolf; and it was evident how his whole heart rejoiced, when any word was uttered in favor of his dear young lord. He then placed the light so that it could not disturb the boy, and conducting the holy father to a comfortable seat, he took his place opposite to him, and began to speak as follows:

"At that Christmas feast, of which my lord was talking to you, there was a great deal of discourse between him and his retainers, with regard to the German merchants, and how the increasing pride and power of the trading towns was to be kept down. Then Biörn stretched out his hand upon that impious golden boar, and swore to put

to death without mercy every German trader whom fate, in what way soever, might cast alive into his power. The gentle Verena turned pale, and would have interposed, but it was too late, for the bloody oath was pronounced. And immediately, as if the prince of evil were resolved at once to grasp with strong bonds the vassal who had thus outlawed himself from the good, a warder entered the hall, and announced that two citizens from some German trading town, an old man and his son, had been cast ashore here, and stood without, craving the hospitality of the lord of the castle. This tidings powerfully affected the knight, still he felt himself bound by his over-hasty vow and by that accursed heathenish boar of gold. We, his squires, received orders to assemble in the castle-yard with our sharply pointed lances and to aim them at the poor defenceless strangers at a given sign. For the first time, and I hope for the last time, in my life, I said nay to the orders of my lord. And I uttered it aloud and with hearty determination. The good God, who must certainly know best whom He will accept and whom He will not, armed me with resolution and strength. And you see, Knight Biörn may have perceived whence the opposition of his old servant arose, and that it was to be respected. Half in anger and half in ridicule, he said: 'Go up to my wife's apartments yonder. Her maidens are running anxiously to and fro; she may be unwell. Go up, Rolf the Good, I tell thee; thus women shall be with women.'

"'You may ridicule, if you like,' I thought; and I went silently in the direction pointed out to me. On the stairs I met two strange and fearful beings, whom I had never seen before; I do not know either how they had got into the castle. One was a great tall man, who looked terribly pale and very thin; the other was a little man with most hideous features and appearance. Indeed when I collected myself and looked carefully at him, he seemed to me truly——"

A slight moaning and convulsive movement of the boy interrupted the narration. Hastening to him, Rolf and the chaplain saw an expression of fearful agony on his countenance, and that his eyes were struggling to open and could not. The holy father made the sign of the cross over him; and by degrees the strange state relaxed, the child slept calmly, and they both returned softly back to their seats.

“You see,” said Rolf, “it is not well to describe more accurately those two fearful beings. It is sufficient to tell you that they proceeded down to the court yard, and I to the chambers of my mistress. The gentle Verena was indeed half-fainting with terrible anxiety, and I hastened to assist her with the little knowledge in the healing virtues of herbs and minerals which the good God has bestowed upon me. But scarcely had she revived, than with that calm holy power, which you know belongs to her, she ordered me to conduct her down to the court-yard, saying that she must either put a stop to the horrors of this night or herself perish. We had to pass by the little bed of the sleeping Sintram; alas! hot tears fell from my eyes when I saw him lying there so calmly and quietly, and smiling in his peaceful slumbers.”

The old trooper put his hand to his eyes, and wept bitterly. Then in a more collected manner he continued:

“We approached the windows of the last flight of steps; here we could distinctly perceive the voice of the eldest of the two merchants, and through the panes, by the torch-light, we could see his noble countenance, and by his side the youthful head of his son. ‘I call Almighty God to witness,’ he exclaimed, ‘that I intended no evil against this house! But I must have fallen among heathens, instead of coming to a Christian knight’s castle, and if it be so, thrust at us at once; and thou, my beloved son, die patiently and steadfastly; we shall know in heaven where-

fore it could not be otherwise.' It seemed to me as if I saw those two fearful forms amid the crowd of retainers. The pale one had a huge sword like a sickle in his hand, the little one held a spear, strangely notched. Verena tore open the window, and cried into the wild night, with her flute-like voice: 'My dearest lord and husband, for the sake of our child, have pity on those good men! Save them from death, and resist the temptations of the evil spirit!' The knight answered in his fury—I cannot repeat his words. He staked his child's life, he called Death and the devil to witness, if he did not keep his word—hush! the boy is starting again. Let me bring this dark narration briefly to an end. Knight Biörn ordered his followers to strike, and gave the sign with eyes that sparkled so fiercely that he has ever since been called Biörn of the Fiery Eyes; at the same time, the two fearful strangers appeared very busy. Then Verena called out with piercing anguish: 'Help, O God, my Saviour!' And the two fearful figures disappeared, and wildly, as if blinded, the knight and his retainers rushed against each other, without doing injury to themselves, but also without being able to strike the defenceless merchants. The latter bowed reverently to Verena, and, as if in silent prayer, passed out of the castle gates, which just now, bursting open with a gust of stormy wind left the passage into the mountains open.

"The lady and I stood on the stairs as if bewildered; then it seemed to me as if I saw the two terrible figures gliding past me softly and mist-like, but Verena called out to me: 'Rolf, did you see the tall pale man and the little hideous one, hurrying up the staircase?' I flew after them; and, alas! I found the poor boy in just that state in which you saw him a few hours ago. Since then, the attack always returns about this time, and the young master is altogether fearfully changed. The lady of the castle saw in the whole occurrence the visible punishment and asser-

tion of the powers of Heaven, and as the Knight Biörn, instead of repenting, ever became more and more Biörn of the Fiery Eyes, she resolved to retire to a cloister, where solitary and alone she could pray for the eternal happiness and temporal deliverance of herself and her poor child!"

Rolf paused, and the chaplain, after some reflection, said: "I can now understand why, six years ago, Biörn confessed his sinfulness to me without more comment, and consented that his wife should take the veil. Some remnant of shame must then have stirred within him, and perhaps it stirs within him yet. At all events, so tender a flower as Verena was not fit to remain longer in such a tempestuous atmosphere. But who is there now to watch over and protect the poor Sintram?"

"The prayers of his mother," replied Rolf. "Reverend sir, when the early light of morning spreads over the sky, as it now does, and the morning breezes whisper through the gleaming window—it always seems to me as if I were looking at the beaming eyes of my mistress, and as if I heard the sweet tones of her voice. The holy Verena, next to God, is our help."

"And our devout supplications to the Lord, also," added the chaplain; and he and Rolf knelt in the early morning in silent and fervent prayer by the bed of the pale boy, who began to smile in his dreams.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun was shining brightly into the room, when Sintram, awakened by its rays, started up. He looked angrily at the chaplain, and said: "So there is a priest in the castle? And yet that wicked dream dares to torment me in his very presence? He must be a pretty priest!"

"My child," replied the chaplain, with great gentleness, "I have prayed very heartily for thee, and will never cease to do so, but God alone is almighty."

"You speak very familiarly to the son of the Knight Biörn!" cried Sintram. "*My child!* and *thee!* If those horrible dreams had not again been haunting me, you would make me laugh heartily."

"Young Lord Sintram!" said the chaplain, "that you do not know me again, in no way surprises me; for, in truth, I do not know you again." And his eyes were moist with tears as he spoke.

Rolf the Good, however, looked sorrowfully in the boy's face, saying: "Ah, dear young lord, you are so much better than you assume to be; why do you do so? And do you not really recollect any longer—for your memory is generally so good—the good kind chaplain, who used to come so often to our castle and give you bright pictures of saints and beautiful songs?"

"I remember that well," replied Sintram, thoughtfully. "My sainted mother was alive then."

"Our gracious lady is still living, God be praised!" said Rolf, smiling.

"Not for us—not for us sick creatures!" exclaimed Sintram. "And why will you not call her sainted? She surely knows nothing of my dreams!"

"Yes, she does know of them, young master!" said the chaplain. "She knows of them and supplicates God for you. But take heed of that wild haughty temper of yours. It might, alas! it might some day be that she might know nothing of your dreams. And that would be if you were cast out body and soul; then the holy angels also would know nothing more of you."

Sintram sank back on his bed as if thunderstruck, and Rolf said, softly, with a sigh: "You must not speak to my sick child with such severity, reverend sir."

The boy raised himself again, and turning with tearful eyes to the chaplain, said: "Let him go on, good tender-hearted Rolf; he knows very well what he is about. Would you reprove him if I were slipping down into a snow-cleft, and he drew me roughly out by the hair of my head?"

The holy father looked at him with emotion and was on the point of giving utterance to some pious thoughts when Sintram sprang from the bed and asked for his father. On being told that he had left, he would not remain an hour longer in the castle, and set aside the fears of the chaplain and the old trooper, who doubted whether so rapid a journey might not prove injurious to his scarcely recovered health, by saying to them:

"Reverend sir, and you, dear old Rolf, only believe me that if I had no dreams I should be the quietest boy on the face of the earth, and even as it is, I am not far behind the best. Besides, a year hence and my dreams will be at an end."

On a somewhat imperious sign from the youth, Rolf soon brought out the horses. The boy sprang boldly into the saddle, and bidding the chaplain a courteous adieu, dashed away with the speed of an arrow along the frozen valleys of the snow-covered mountains.

He had not ridden far with his old trooper when he heard a hollow sound coming from a neighboring rocky cleft; the sound was like the clapper of a mill, but it was intermingled with groans and tones of distress proceeding from a human voice. They turned their horses in the direction of the noise and a wonderful sight was revealed to them.

A tall man, deadly pale, in a pilgrim's garb, was vainly using all his efforts to work his way up the mountain out of the deep snow, and in so doing a mass of bones kept rattling, which he wore hanging loosely from his white garment, and this had produced the mysterious knocking above mentioned.

Rolf, startled at the apparition, crossed himself, and the bold Sintram called out to the stranger: "What are you doing there? Give an account of your solitary labor!"

"I live in dying," replied the other with a fearful grin.

"Whose are those bones on your garments?"

"They are relics, young sir."

"Then you are a pilgrim?"

"Restless, reposeless; to and fro in the earth."

"You must not perish here in the snow before my eyes."

"I do not wish to do so."

"You must mount my horse and ride with me."

"I will do so."

And at once he extricated himself from the snow with unexpected strength and agility, and sat behind Sintram on his horse, clasping him tight with his long arms. The horse, frightened at the rattling of the bones, and as if seized with madness, galloped away through the trackless valleys. The boy soon found himself alone with his strange companion; far in the distance Rolf spurred on his panting horse in vain pursuit.

Down a snowy precipice, gliding rather than falling, Sintram's horse reached a narrow gorge, and though somewhat exhausted, the animal continued to snort and foam as before; the boy was still unable to master it, yet it changed its breathless course into a wild, irregular trot, and the following conversation began between Sintram and the stranger:

"Thou pale man, draw thy garments closer; the bones would not rattle then, and I could curb my horse."

"It's no use, my boy, it's no use; it belongs to the nature of the bones."

"Don't clasp me so tight with thy long arms. Thy arms are so cold."

"It can't be helped, my boy; it can't be helped. Be

content. My long cold arms are not yet pressing on thy heart."

"Do not breathe on me so with thy icy breath. It takes all my strength away."

"I must breathe, my boy; I must breathe. But do not complain. I am not breathing thee away."

The strange dialogue ended; for, contrary to his expectation, Sintram came out upon an open snowy plain, on which the sun was shining brightly, and at no great distance before him he saw his father's castle. While he was considering whether to invite the mysterious pilgrim to enter, all doubt was removed by the latter throwing himself suddenly from the horse, which halted in its wild career. Then he turned to the boy and said, raising his forefinger:

"I know old Biörn of the Fiery Eyes very well; perhaps only too well. Remember me to him. He need not know my name. He will recognize me by description."

So saying, the pale stranger turned into a thick grove of firs and disappeared, rattling among the intertwined branches.

Slowly and thoughtfully Sintram rode on toward his father's castle, for his much exhausted horse had now become quite quiet. He scarcely knew what he ought to tell of his wonderful journey, and what not; moreover, his heart was oppressed with anxiety for the good Rolf, whom he had left behind.

Presently he found himself at the castle gate, before he had fully thought over the matter. The draw-bridge was lowered, the portals were thrown open; a squire conducted the youth into the large hall, where Knight Biörn was sitting all alone at a huge table, with many flagons and drinking-glasses before him and suits of armor ranged around him. It was a sort of daily habit with him, by way of company, to have the armor of his ancestors, with closed visors, placed around his table.

The father and son began to converse as follows:

“Where is Rolf?”

“I don’t know, father. He left me in the mountains.”

“I will have Rolf shot for not taking better care of my only child.”

“Well then, father, you can have your only child shot too, for I could not live without Rolf; and if an arrow or a dart is aimed at him, I will throw myself in the way of it, and shield his true and good heart with my fickle breast.”

“Indeed! Then Rolf shall not be shot, but I shall send him from the castle.”

“Well then, father, you will see me run away too; and I will serve him as his faithful squire in forest and mountain and fir-grove.”

“Indeed! Then Rolf must remain here.”

“That is just what I think, father.”

“Did you ride quite alone?”

“No, father, but with a strange pilgrim; he said he knew you well, or perhaps too well.”

And thereupon Sintram proceeded to relate and to describe everything respecting the pale man. “I also know him very well,” said Knight Biörn. “He is half-crazed, and half-wise, as we have sometimes seen strangely blended together in people. But, my boy, go to rest now after your wild journey. You have my word of honor that Rolf shall be received well and kindly, and shall be even sought for in the mountains if he remain long absent.”

“I rely upon you, father,” replied Sintram, in a tone half-humble, half-scornful, as he followed the orders of the gloomy lord of the castle.

CHAPTER IV.

TOWARD evening Sintram woke again. He saw the good Rolf sitting by his bedside, and he smiled with an air of un wonted child-like brightness at the kindly face of the true-hearted old man. Soon, however, his dark eyebrows contracted again with a feeling of indignation, and he asked:

"How did my father receive you, Rolf? Did he say a harsh word to you?"

"No, dear young master. He did not speak to me at all. At first he looked angrily at me; then he checked himself, and ordered a squire to bring me food and wine to refresh me, and afterward to conduct me to you."

"He might have kept his word better. But he is my father, and I must make allowance. I will now go to the evening meal."

He sprang up at once and threw on his fur mantle. But Rolf cast himself entreatingly in his way, and said: "Dear young master, you would do better to sup in your chamber to-day. There is a guest with your father, in whose company I do not like to see you. If you will stay here, I will sing you some beautiful songs."

"I should have liked that beyond everything in the world, dear Rolf," replied Sintram. "But it is not given me to avoid any man. Tell me, at any rate, whom should I find with my father?"

"Ah, young master," said the old man, "you have already met him in the mountains. Formerly when I used to ride out with the Knight Biörn, we met him occasionally; but I was not allowed to tell you anything about him, and to-day is the first time he has ever come to the castle."

"Oh, it's the crazy pilgrim!" replied Sintram, and he re-

mained for some time in deep thought, as if considering the matter. At last he roused himself from his abstraction and said: "You good old friend, I like far better to remain quite alone with you this evening, and to hear your songs and stories; and all the pilgrims in the world should not entice me from this quiet room. There is only one thing which makes me hesitate. I have a kind of awe of that pale tall man, and no knight's son may suffer such a feeling to master him. Don't be angry, Rolf, but I must positively look into the strange face of that pilgrim."

And as he said this, he opened the door of his apartment, and with firm and ringing steps proceeded to the hall.

The pilgrim and the Knight Biörn were sitting opposite to each other at the large table, on which many tapers were still burning; and it was strange to see those two tall pale figures move, and eat, and drink, among the lifeless armor that surrounded them.

When the pilgrim looked up at the boy's entrance, Knight Biörn said: "You know him already; he is my only child, and your fellow-traveler this morning."

The pilgrim fixed his eye upon Sintram for some time, and then replied, shaking his head: "That I didn't know till now!"

Then the boy burst forth impatiently: "Now I must confess that you are most unfair! You say you believe you know my father only too well; and me, it seems, you know only too little. Look me in the face. Who was it allowed you to ride on his horse with him, and whose good steed did you make almost wild in return? Speak, if you can!"

Knight Biörn smiled and shook his head, but seemed well satisfied, as was his wont, with his son's wild behavior; the pilgrim, on the contrary, shuddered as if alarmed by the threatening presence of some fearful and irresistible power. At last, in an almost fearful tone, he brought out the words: "Yes, yes, my dear young knight, you are per-

fectly right; you are perfectly right in everything which it may please you to advance."

The lord of the castle laughed aloud at this, and exclaimed: "Why, thou pilgrim, thou mysterious man, what is become of all thy strange sayings and fine warnings? Has the boy made thee all at once dumb and powerless? Beware, thou prophet-messenger, beware!"

But the pilgrim cast a fearful look on the Knight Biörn, which almost threatened to extinguish the light of his fiery eyes, and said in a solemn and thundering voice: "Between me and thee, old man, it is another thing. We have nothing to reproach each other with. And hearken: I will sing a song to thee on the lute." He stretched out his hand to the wall, and took down a forgotten and half-strung lute which hung there; then placing it in order with wonderful power and skill, he touched a few chords, and began the following song to the deep and melancholy tones of the instrument:

"The flower was mine, it was mine own!
But I trifled with my sacred right,
I became a slave and not a knight,
Through sin, through sin alone.
The flower was thine, it was thine own!
Why didst thou not hold fast thy right?
Thou slave of sin—no longer knight!
Now thou art fearfully alone!"

"Beware!" cried he, with a shrill voice as he concluded, at the same time pulling the strings so violently that they all broke with a plaintive wail, and a cloud of dust rose strangely from the old lute, enveloping the singer as in a mist.

Sintram had been watching him keenly during the song, and it appeared to him at last inconceivable that this man and his fellow-traveler could be one and the same. Indeed, the doubt rose almost to certainty when the stranger again

looked at him with a sort of timid fear, and making many excuses and low reverences, hung the lute in its old place, and then ran fearfully out of the hall; affording in every look and action a strange contrast to the haughty solemn air he had assumed toward the Knight Biörn.

The boy's eye now fell upon the knight, and he saw that he had fallen back on his seat senseless, as if struck by a blow. Sintram's cries called the good Rolf and other attendants to the hall; and after much care and united effort, they succeeded in reviving the lord of the castle, though his looks still remained wild and excited, and he allowed himself to be put to rest quietly and submissively.

CHAPTER V.

THIS strange attack was followed by an illness, in which the hitherto robust old knight was constantly delirious, though he asserted all the while that he must and should recover. He laughed scornfully at his attacks of fever, and rebuked them for venturing to assail him so unnecessarily.

Then he would often murmur to himself: "That was not the right one, that was not the right one; there must be yet another out in the cold mountains." At these words Sintram always involuntarily shuddered. They seemed to confirm his own opinion that the man who had ridden with him, and the man who had sat at table in the castle, were two perfectly distinct persons; and he knew not why, but this thought was excessively terrible to him.

Knight Biörn recovered, and seemed to have entirely forgotten the whole circumstance of the pilgrim. He hunted in the mountains, he engaged in many a wild quarrel, and Sintram as he grew up became his almost constant companion, developing as he did every year more and more a fearful strength of body and of mind. Many a

one feared the look of his pale sharp features, his dark rolling eyes, his tall muscular and somewhat lean figure; and yet no one hated him, not even those whom he had insulted or injured in his wildest moods. Possibly this may have proceeded from the kindly presence of the old Rolf, who ever retained a gentle influence over him; but most of those who had known the Lady Verena before she retired from the world, asserted that there was a faint reflection of the mother's grace floating over the dissimilar features of her son, and that this attracted them to the youth.

One day—it was at the beginning of spring—Biörn and his son had been hunting on the sea-coast, on the territory of another chieftain; and this, less for the love of sport than to bid defiance to a hated neighbor, and so perhaps to excite a feud. At this period, when his yearly fearful attack had passed off, Sintram was as usual even more wild and eager for combat than was his wont. It irritated him much on this day that his adversary did not come out of his castle to make armed resistance to their hunting; and in the wildest words the youth cursed his tame patience and weak love of peace. Just then a young reckless horseman of his suite galloped joyfully up, shouting:

“Calm yourself, my dear young lord! I will wager that all will be as you and we desire. I was following a wounded deer on the sea-shore, when I saw a sail approaching, and a vessel filled with armed men. There is no doubt your enemy means to fall upon you on the coast.”

Joyfully and secretly Sintram called all his hunting companions together, resolved this time to take the contest into his own hands, and then victoriously to rejoin his father, and to surprise him with his prisoners and captured weapons.

Well acquainted with all the hollows, glens and cliffs

of the coast, the hunters quickly concealed themselves in the neighborhood of the landing-place, and the strange vessel soon approached with its swelling sails, anchored quietly in the bay, and the men began to disembark in imagined security.

Foremost of all appeared a knight of splendid and noble bearing, arrayed in blue steel armor richly inlaid with gold. His uncovered head—for he carried his costly golden helmet hanging on his left arm—looked royally around, and his countenance was fair to look upon, with his dark-brown hair, and his well-trimmed mustache, beneath which might be caught a glimpse of a smiling mouth and two rows of pearly teeth.

It seemed to the young Sintram as if he had seen this knight somewhere before, and he stood for a time motionless. Suddenly, however, he raised his arm to give the concerted signal for attack. In vain the good Rolf, who had with difficulty succeeded in reaching the wild youth, whispered in his ear that these were not the enemies they were expecting, but unknown, and certainly noble strangers.

“Let them be who they may,” murmured the angry Sintram in reply, “they have excited me to foolish waiting, and they must pay for it. Don’t oppose me if you value your life and mine.”

And immediately he gave the signal, and thick as hail a shower of javelins whizzed on every side, and the northern warriors rushed forward, with their flashing weapons.

They found their adversaries as brave as they could have desired, and perhaps still more so. Soon more of the attacking than of the attacked had fallen, and the stranger seemed to understand surprisingly the northern mode of fighting.

The knight in the gorgeous armor had not been able in

his haste to put on his helmet, but it seemed also as if he did not consider it worth the trouble. His gleaming sword protected him surely enough. He parried the flying darts with a movement quick as lightning, and dashed them away with such violence that they fell to the ground shivered to fragments.

Sintram had at first not been able to approach him; for all his followers, eager to take so noble a prey, had thronged around the brilliant knight; but now wherever the stranger turned the way was sufficiently cleared, and Sintram sprung toward him with his sword upraised, shouting a battle-cry.

"Gabrielle!" exclaimed the knight, intercepting with ease the violent thrust, and striking the youth to the ground; then kneeling down on his fallen foe, he drew forth a glittering dagger and held it before him. Like massive walls, his followers in a moment stood around him; Sintram seemed lost without hope of deliverance.

He determined to die as became a bold warrior, and unmoved he gazed at the fatal weapon with a steady, unflinching eye.

As he lay now thus looking upward it seemed to him as if suddenly there appeared on the horizon a wonderfully beautiful female form in azure garments gleaming with gold.

"Our ancestors were right in their tales of the Valkyrias!" murmured he. "Strike, unknown conqueror!"

But the knight did not strike, and no Valkyrias had appeared; it was the beautiful wife of the stranger, who had just come up to the upper deck of the vessel and had thus fallen into Sintram's view.

"Folko," cried she, in a sweet voice; "thou knight without reproach! I know that thou wilt spare the vanquished!"

The knight sprung up with noble grace, extended his

hand to the conquered youth and said: "Thank the noble lady of Montfaucon for your life and liberty. If, however, you are so totally devoid of all that is good that you wish to begin the contest again, I am ready, but you must strike first!"

Sintram sunk on his knees, overwhelmed with shame, and wept, for he had long heard of the great deeds of his distant relative, the French Knight Folko of Montfaucon, and of the grace of his gentle Lady Gabrielle.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Baron of Montfaucon looked with astonishment at his strange adversary; but as he gazed at him more and more, remembrances rose within him, calling to his mind the northern race from which his ancestors were descended, and with whom he had always maintained friendly intercourse. A golden bear's claw fastening Sintram's cloak confirmed his suspicions.

"Have you not," he asked, "a valiant cousin, called the Sea King Arin Biörn, who wears on his helmet a golden vulture-wing? and is not your father the Knight Biörn? for I think the bear's claw on your breast must be the heraldic badge of your race."

Sintram assented to all this in deep and humble shame.

The knight of Montfaucon raised him from the ground and said in a grave, gentle tone: "We are then related to each other, but I had never thought that any one of our honorable house could have attacked a peaceful man without provocation, and moreover without warning."

"Slay me," replied Sintram, "if I am still worthy to die by such noble hands; I have no desire to see the light of day any longer."

"Because you have been conquered?" asked Montfaucon.

Sintram shook his head.

“Or because you have committed an unknighly act?”

The youth’s blush of shame expressed assent.

“You must not wish to die on that account,” continued Montfaucon, “but far rather to make amends for your fault and to render yourself illustrious by many glorious deeds. See, you are blessed with valor and strength of limb, and moreover with the eagle glance of a general. I would dub you a knight at once had you fought as well in a good cause as you have in a bad one. Let me soon have occasion to do so. You may yet become a hero full of honor.”

A merry sound of pipes and silver cymbals interrupted the conversation. Gabrielle, beautiful as the morning, disembarked, followed by her maidens, and being informed by Folko in a few words respecting his late adversary, she regarded the whole contest as a mere trial of arms, saying:

“You must not let it vex you, noble sir, that my husband has won the prize, for you must know that in the whole world there is only one hero over whom the lord of Montfaucon cannot boast of victory. And who knows,” she continued, half-jestingly, “whether even that would have been so but that he presumed to win back the magic ring from me who had been allotted to him as a bride by the will of God and by the choice of my own heart.”

Folko bent smiling over the snow-white hand of his lady and then begged the youth to conduct him to his father’s castle. Rolf undertook with great pleasure to superintend the disembarkation of the horses and other valuables, for it seemed to him that an angel in woman’s form had appeared to soften his beloved young master, and perhaps even to free him from that early curse.

Sintram had sent messengers in all directions to seek his father and to announce to him the arrival of the noble guests. They therefore found the Knight Biörn already

in his castle and everything arranged for a festive reception. Gabrielle entered the lofty gloomy building with a feeling of awe, and looked with still greater fear at the rolling fiery eyes of its master; now even the pale dark-haired Sintram appeared to her terrible, and she sighed within herself :

“ Oh ! what an awful abode, my knight, hast thou brought me to visit ! Oh ! that we were at home once more in my sunny Gascony, or in thy knightly Normandy ! ”

But the grand and noble reception, the deep reverential respect paid to her grace and to Knight Folko's renown tended to reassure her, and soon her butterfly delight in all that was new was pleasantly awakened by the unwonted aspect of everything in this strange world. Besides, any womanly fear could but trouble her for a moment when her lord was near. She knew too well the powerful protection afforded by the noble baron of Montfaucon to all that were dear to him or commended to his charge.

Presently Rolf passed through the large hall in which they were seated, conducting the attendants of the strangers and their baggage up to their apartments. As they went by, Gabrielle caught sight of her favorite lute, and ordered a page to bring it to her, that she might see if her precious instrument had in any way suffered from the sea-voyage. As she bent over it, tuning it with earnest attention, and her taper fingers ran up and down the strings, a smile like the light of spring passed over the dark countenances of Biörn and Sintram, and both exclaimed with an involuntary sigh :

“ Oh ! if she would play and sing to it, that would be delightful ! ”

The lady felt flattered, and looked smilingly at them, nodded a gracious assent, and sang as she touched her lute :

“ When the flowers come back
In the merry May,
And the glad birds sing,
In the jocund spring,
Yet one, alas! one is away!

“ That one, ah! well do I know its name,
But I cannot, I will not the sound disclose,
For the love that I bore it, none else may claim
Though the heart that it loved, it no longer knows.

“ Oh! nightingale, tune not so sweetly thy voice
On the blossoming, lovely spray;
My heart swells with sadness and cannot rejoice
As thy cadence falls softly and gay;
Tune less sweetly thy voice!

“ For we hail the flowers,
And the welcome showers,
Of blooming May;
But the one alone
Alas! once my own,
Is forever away.”

The two Norwegians sat lost in sad reflection; Sintram's eyes especially sparkled with a soft lustre, a faint blush overspread his cheeks, and his features assumed a subdued expression, giving him almost the appearance of a glorified spirit. The good Rolf, who had paused to listen to the song, was heartily delighted at this, and raised his old faithful hands in fervent gratitude to heaven.

Gabrielle, however, in her astonishment could not take her eyes from Sintram. At last she said:

“ My young friend, now tell me what has touched you so much in this little song? It is nothing at all but a simple lay of the spring, full of the images which that sweet season, with its thousand changes and revivals, ever calls forth in my country.”

“ Have you such a home, so wonderfully beautiful and

so rich in song?" exclaimed Sintram with enthusiasm. "Then I am no longer surprised at your unearthly beauty, nor at the power which you exercise over my hard, wild heart; for a Paradise of song must surely send such angelic messengers to calm the chaos that pervades the world." And as he spoke he sank on both knees before the beautiful lady in deep humility.

Folko smiled approvingly, but Gabrielle appeared embarrassed, and as if she scarcely knew what to do with the half-wild, half-tamed young Northman. After a moment's reflection, however, she held out to him her fair hand, and said as she gently raised him:

"Any one who finds so much pleasure in song must certainly know how to awaken it himself. Take my lute, and let us hear some sweetly inspired lay."

But Sintram gently refused the delicate instrument, and said:

"Heaven forbid my manly hand should touch these tender strings! Were I even to begin some soft melodious strain, yet at last, as the music swells, the wild spirit that dwells within me would burst forth, and there would be an end of this magic lute. No, allow me to fetch my own powerful harp, with its strings of bears' sinews and its brass mountings. For, in truth, I feel myself inspired both to play and to sing!"

Gabrielle whispered a half-smiling half-fearful assent, and Sintram speedily procured his wonderful harp, and began to strike its deep-toned strings with a strong touch, and to sing with a voice no less powerful, the following song:

"Knight, whither away in the raging gale?"

"To a southern shore I hoist my sail."

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

"I have traversed enough of the frozen snow,

Through clovered meadows I now will go."

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

The stars guide him by night and the sun by day,
Till he anchors in glorious Napoli's bay.

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

There wanders an exquisite girl on the strand,
Her hair is entwined with a golden band.

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

"Good-day, good-day to thee, fairest one,
My bride thou shalt be ere setting sun."

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

"Nay, Sir Knight, thy wooing I must reject,
A Margrave has made me his bride elect."

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

"Let him come then and try his sword with me,
And the combat shall show who possesseth thee!"

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

"Oh! see 'mid the beautiful maidens around,
Another in whom fairer graces abound!"

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

"Nay, nay! upon thee have I centered my love,
And no power exists which its force can remove."

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

Then came the young Margrave, revengeful and sore,
And the Northman's good sword laid him low in his gore.

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

And then the glad hero exultingly cried:

"Now, now, all are mine, lands, castle and bride!"

Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!

Sintram ceased, but his eyes sparkled wildly, and the strings of his harp ever kept reverberating in a kind of marvelous cadence. Biörn had drawn himself haughtily erect in his chair, and stroked his huge mustache and rattled his sword, as if with pleasure.

Gabrielle trembled at the wild song and at these strange beings, but the fear only lasted till she cast a glance at Sir Folko of Montfaucon, who was sitting smiling in all his knightly strength, letting the rude uproar rage around him, like the hurly-burly of some autumnal storm.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME weeks after this Sintram came down to the castle-garden one evening in the twilight, in a state of great discomposure. However much Gabrielle's presence might soothe and calm his mind, the fearful wildness of his nature returned if she disappeared for a moment from the social circle. Just now, after having long and kindly read aloud some ancient heroic tales to the elder Biörn, she had retired to her own apartments. The tones of her lute were distinctly to be heard in the garden below, but it seemed as if these very sounds drove the wild youth still more impetuously through the shades of the time-honored elms. Stooping under some thickly-grown branches he came unexpectedly close upon something with which he almost fell into collision, and which appeared to him at first sight like a little bear, standing on its hind legs, with a long and strangely crooked horn on its head. He started back with alarm, but it addressed him in a harsh, human voice:

"Young knight, brave young knight, whence come you? Whither are you going? And why so frightened?" and Sintram now for the first time saw that he had before him a little old man, wrapped up in a rough fur garment, which almost entirely concealed his features, and he wore a long and strange-looking feather in his cap.

"Whence come *you*? And whither are *you* going?" replied Sintram, indignantly. "Such questions are befit-

ting for me to ask. What are you doing in our castle-garden, you ugly little man?"

"Well, well," said the other, laughing, "I am thinking that I am quite big enough as I am. One cannot always be a giant. And besides, what do you find amiss in my going on a snail-hunt here? Snails do not surely belong to the game, which you, with your experienced valor, have reserved as sport for yourselves alone. I, on the other hand, know how to prepare them a delicious aromatic drink, and I have already caught sufficient for to-day; marvelous fat little creatures, with wise faces like men, and long twisted horns on their heads. Will you look, young master?"

And so saying he unbuttoned and unhooked his fur mantle, but Sintram, seized with horror and disgust, exclaimed:

"Pshaw! Such animals are repulsive to me! Let them alone, and tell me instead who and what you really are yourself."

"Are you so bent upon names?" replied the little man. "Let it content you that I am a master of the most secret lore, and am well acquainted with the oldest and most intricate histories. Ah! young master, if you would only hear them once! But you are afraid of me!"

"Afraid of you?" said Sintram, with a wild laugh.

"Many a better man than you has been so," murmured the little master; "only they would confess to it just as little."

"To prove the contrary to you," said Sintram, "I will remain with you till the moon is high in the heavens. But then you must tell me your stories."

The little man gave a nod of satisfaction, and while they both paced up and down a retired elm-walk he began as follows:

"Many hundred years ago there was a handsome young

knight, called Paris of Troy, and he lived in the burning lands of the South, where there are the sweetest songs, the most aromatic-smelling flowers, and the most charming women. You know a song about that land, young sir, do you not? 'Heigh-ho! for the land with the beautiful flowers!' Isn't it so?"

Sintram bowed his head in assent, and his breast heaved a deep sigh.

"Well," continued the little master, "Paris had a habit, such as is frequent in those countries, and of which very pretty rhymes are often sung: he would pass whole months in the garb of a peasant, and go piping about the woods and fields, pasturing his flocks. One day three beautiful sorceresses appeared to him, disputing about a golden apple, and they desired to know from him which of them was the fairest, for to her the golden fruit was to belong. The first knew how to obtain thrones and sceptres and crowns, the second could make people wise, and the third could prepare love-potions and love-charms which could secure the favor of the most beautiful women. Each offered her choicest gifts to the shepherd-knight, that he might award the apple to her. But as fair women pleased him better than anything else in the world, he decided that the third was the most lovely, and her name was Venus. The two others departed in great displeasure, but Venus bid him put on again his knightly armor, and his hat with its waving feathers, and then she conducted him to a splendid fortress in a city called Sparta, where the noble Duke Menelaus ruled with his young Duchess Helen. She was the most beautiful woman upon earth, and the enchantress was ready to bestow her on Paris in gratitude for the golden apple. Paris was well satisfied at this, and wished for nothing better; only he asked himself how he ought to begin."

"Paris must have been a fine knight!" said Sintram,

interrupting the story. "Such things are easily settled. Challenge the husband to fight, and the victor possesses the lady."

"But Duke Menelaus was the knight's host," said the narrator.

"Well, little master," exclaimed Sintram, "he might have asked the sorceress for another beautiful woman, and then have saddled his horse, or weighed anchor, and departed!"

"Yes, yes, it is very easy to say so!" replied the little old man. "But if you had only seen how bewitching this Duchess Helen was. She was not to be changed for any." And with glowing words he began to depict the beauty of the wonderful woman, but feature for feature was so like the image of Gabrielle that Sintram tottered and was obliged to support himself against a tree. The little master stood opposite to him, laughing, and asked:

"Well now, should you have still counselled flight to that poor Knight Paris?"

"Tell me quickly what happened," stammered out Sintram.

"The sorceress acted honorably toward the knight," continued the old man. "She told him beforehand that he would carry away the charming duchess to his castle at Troy, that it would be the ruin of himself and his city and his whole race, but that for ten years he would be able to defend himself in Troy and to delight in Helen's sweet love."

"And he accepted the terms, or he was a fool!" exclaimed the youth.

"Yes, surely," whispered the little master, "he accepted them. And I would have done so myself! Well, my young hero, things looked then much as they are looking now. Through the thickly intertwined branches of the trees, the moon, just passing from beneath the clouds,

was shining in the silent twilight. Leaning against an old tree, just as you are doing now, stood the slender ardent Knight Paris, and by his side was the enchantress Venus, but so disguised and transformed that she did not look much more beautiful than I do. And in the silvery light of the moon, through the whispering boughs, there appeared the form of a lovely and much desired lady, sweeping along, in solitary meditation."

He was silent, and like the reflection of his deluding word, Gabrielle just then actually appeared, musing solitarily as she swept down the avenue of elms.

"Man! Fearful master! how am I to name you? What do you wish to urge me to?" whispered the trembling Sintram.

"You know of course your father's mighty stone fortress on the Moon-Rocks!" replied the old man. "The governor and his men are true and devoted to you! It would stand a ten years' siege, and the little gate which leads from here to the mountains is open, as was the gate of the citadel in the ducal fortress of Sparta to Paris."

And truly, through a door in the wall, left open he knew not how, the youth saw in the distance, gleaming in the moonlight, the dim range of mountains.

"And," said the little master, with a grin, repeating Sintram's former words—"and if he did not accept the terms, he was a fool!"

At that moment, Gabrielle stood close by him. With a slight movement of his arm he could have embraced her, and a moonbeam, suddenly breaking forth, shone like a ray of glory upon her heavenly beauty. The youth had already bent forward toward her.

"Let not the world's turmoil,
His heart and spirit soil,
I pray, Oh Lord my God!
Call him to thee on high,

To mansions in the sky,
Trough through anguish be the road ! ”

These words were at this moment chanted by the old Rolf, as he lingered in solitary prayer by the castle-lake, full of foreboding care. They reached Sintram's ear, and he stood as if spell-bound, and made the sign of the cross. The little master at once hopped away on one leg, with a strange, awkward rapidity through the gate, which he closed with a yell after him.

Terrified at the wild noise, Gabrielle started ; Sintram approached her softly, and said, offering her his arm : “ Permit me to accompany you to the castle hall. The night sometimes in our northern hills is somewhat wild and fearful.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY found the two knights within over their wine. Folko was relating stories in his usual lively and cheerful manner ; and Biörn was listening moodily, but it seemed as if the dark clouds were almost against his will giving way to a pleasing sense of comfort.

Gabrielle greeted her lord with a smile and, signing to him to continue, took her seat near the Knight Biörn with an air of cheerful attention ; Sintram stood sad and dream-like by the hearth, and stirred up the embers, which cast a strange glow upon his pale face.

“ And above all the German trading towns,” continued Montfaucon, “ that of Hamburg is the richest and the greatest. In Normandy, we are always glad to see their merchants land on our coasts, and are always ready to help the good excellent people by word and deed. I was received with great honor once when I visited Hamburg. Moreover, I found its inhabitants just engaged in a feud

with a neighboring count, and I at once used my sword in their behalf with vigor and success."

"Your sword! your knightly sword!" broke forth Biörn, the old fire flashing from his eyes, "against a knight! And for costermongers?"

"Sir," said Folko, quietly, "*how* the barons of Montfaucon have used their swords has ever rested with themselves, without the interference of any third person, and I intend to maintain this good custom as I have received it. If you are opposed to it, say so freely. At the same time I forbid any rude word against the men of Hamburg, whom I have already declared to be my friends."

Biörn cast down his haughty eyes and the fire faded from them. Then in a low voice he said: "Speak on, noble baron, you are right and I am wrong."

Folko held out his hand to him in friendship across the table, and thus continued his narration:

"The dearest of all my dear friends at Hamburg are two people of marvelous experience—a father and his son. What have they not seen and done in the remotest ends of the earth, and established for the welfare of their native town? Thanks be to God, my life is not to be called a barren one, but compared to the wise Gotthard Lenz and to his powerful son Rudlieb, I seem to myself like a squire who has been to a couple of tournaments, and has perhaps in the chase reached the uttermost boundary of his own forests. They have converted, overcome, gladdened, dark men in lands whose name I do not know, and the riches they have brought back with them they have dedicated to the common good, as though there were nothing else to do with it. On their return home from their bold voyages they hasten to a hospital established by them, and there they act as overseers and as watchful, humble nurses. Then they select building-ground for handsome towers and fortresses, which they erect for the protection of their

country; then, again, they inspect houses in which the wandering pilgrim finds a hospitable resting-place; and, lastly, in their own home they entertain their guests, rich and noble as kings, and simple and unconstrained as shepherds; and many a tale of their adventures gives a relish to the choice viands and the costly wine; among others they have told me one at which my hair stood on end, and perhaps I can here gather closer information from you with regard to the occurrence. It was many years ago, just at the holy Christmas season, that Gotthard and Rudlieb were wrecked on the Norwegian coast during a violent storm; they cannot accurately declare the position of the rocks on which their vessel struck; but so much is certain, that not far from the spot the towers of a strong knightly castle rose, and father and son repaired thither to request assistance and refreshment, such as Christian people are wont to give, leaving meanwhile their followers in the shipwrecked vessel. The castle gate was opened to them and they thought that all was well. All at once the court-yard was filled with armed men, who directed their sharp, steel-pointed lances against the helpless strangers, whose honorable representations and gentle entreaties were met only by sullen silence, or with hoarse and scornful jeering. At last a knight came down the flight of stairs with eyes flashing fire—they know not if it were a phantom, or some wild heathen—he gave a signal and the fatal lances closed more narrowly around them. At that moment the flute-like tones of a woman's voice were heard, calling on God to help, and in mad fury the specters rushed against each other, the gates flew open, and Gotthard and Rudlieb fled, catching a glimpse as they passed of an angelic woman at a lighted window. They made every exertion to get their leaking vessel again afloat, preferring rather to give themselves up to the sea than to that terrible shore, and at last after manifold dangers they landed in Denmark.

“They are of opinion that that wicked castle was a heathen fortress, but I consider it to be some ruined stronghold deserted by man, in which hellish specters carry on their sport by night, for tell me, what heathen would be so demon-like as to offer death to shipwrecked suppliants instead of refreshment and assistance?”

Biörn stared fixedly before him, as if turned to stone. But Sintram stepped from the hearth to the table and said: “Father, let us seek out this nest of wickedness, and lay it even with the ground. I know not why, but my mind is impressed with it as a certainty, that this fearful occurrence is alone to blame for my terrible dreams.”

Burning with rage against his son, Biörn rose up, and would perhaps again have uttered some dreadful imprecation, but it was not to be; for just at that moment the pealing notes of a trumpet interrupted his angry words, the folding-doors were solemnly thrown open, and a herald entered the apartment.

He bowed reverently, and then said: “I am sent by Jarl Eric the Aged. Two nights ago he returned from his expedition in the Grecian Sea. He had intended to take vengeance on the island which is called Chios, because about fifty years ago his father had been slain there by the mercenaries of the emperor. But your kinsman, the sea-king Arin Biörn, was lying at anchor in the bay, and advised pacification. Jarl Eric would not hear of this, and the sea-king Arin Biörn at length said that he would never suffer the island of Chios to be laid waste, because it was there that the songs of an ancient Greek bard, named Homer, were gloriously sung, and moreover very choice wines were drunk there. From parley they proceeded to combat, and so mightily did the sea-king Arin Biörn prevail, that Jarl Eric lost two of his vessels, and only escaped with difficulty in one which was already much injured. For this act Eric the Aged hopes one day to make the

house of the sea-king atone, since Arin Biörn is himself not on the spot. Will you therefore, Biörn of the Fiery Eyes, make compensation to Jarl in as much oxen, money and land as he demands? Or will you prepare to meet him for battle on Niflung's Heath, seven days hence?"

Biörn bowed his head composedly, and repeated in a courteous tone: "Seven days hence at Niflung's Heath." He then presented the herald with a gold embossed goblet full of rich wine, saying, "Drink that, and then hide the cup that thou hast emptied in thy mantle, and take it with thee."

"Greet thy Jarl also from the Baron of Montfaucon," added Folko, "and tell him that I too will be present at Niflung's Heath, as the hereditary friend of the sea-king, and as kinsman and guest of Biörn of the Fiery Eyes."

The herald evidently started at the name of Montfaucon; he bent very low, looked with reverent attention at the baron, and quitted the hall.

Gabrielle smiled at her knight with an untroubled and loving air, for well she knew his renown as a warrior; she only asked: "Where shall I remain, Folko, when you go forth to battle?"

"I thought," replied Biörn, "you would be pleased to stay in my castle, beautiful lady. I leave my son behind for you as ward and squire."

Gabrielle hesitated for a moment, and Sintram having returned to his place by the hearth, muttered to himself, looking gloomily at the bright flame: "Yes, yes it will possibly be so. It seems so me that Duke Menelaus may have just left the fortress of Sparta on some such warlike expedition, when the ardent Knight Paris met the beautiful Helen at eventide in the garden."

But Gabrielle, shuddering she knew not why, said suddenly: "Without you, Folko? And shall I then be deprived of the pleasure of seeing you fight? and miss the honor of tending you should you be wounded?"

Folko bowed and gracefully thanked his lady, and replied:

“Go with your knight, since thou so desirest it, and be his lovely inspiring star. It is indeed a good old northern custom that women should be present at the contests of knights, and no Northman will disturb the spot brightened with the light of their eyes. Unless”—inquired he, casting a glance at Biörn—“Eric Jarl perhaps is not worthy of his ancestors.”

“He is a man of honor,” asserted Biörn.

“Then array yourself, my fairest love,” said Folko, half singing and half speaking, “and come forth with us to the battle-field as judge of our prowess!”

“Forth! Forth with us to the battle-field!” echoed Sintram, enthusiastically, and all dispersed cheerfully and hopefully, Sintram repairing to the forest, and the rest to repose.

CHAPTER IX.

NIFLUNG’S HEATH was the name given to a desolate and dreary tract of country in Norway; it was said that the young Niflung, the son of Högne, the last of his race, had there darkly ended a sad and unsuccessful life. Many ancient gravestones were scattered around, and in the few oak-trees which rustled here and there on the plain, mighty eagles had built their nests, and fought at times so bitterly with each other that the flapping of their heavy wings and their angry cry could be heard afar in more inhabited regions, and the children in the cradles would start at the sound, and the old men would quake with fear as they sat slumbering round the hearth.

The seventh night, the last before the day of battle, was just drawing in, and on both sides two mounted bands

might be seen descending the hills; that in the west led by Eric the Aged, that in the east by Biörn of the Fiery Eyes; for custom required that the combatants should appear on the field of battle previous to the hour appointed, in order to intimate that they rather sought than shunned the contest.

Folko immediately pitched, on the most convenient spot, his tent of azure samite, fringed with gold, which he had brought with him for his fair lady's comfort, while Sintram rode across to Jarl Eric the Aged, in the manner of a herald, to announce to him that the beautiful Gabrielle of Montfaucon was riding in the armed troops of the Knight Biörn, and would be present in the morning as judge of the combat. Eric Jarl bowed low at this agreeable tidings, and ordered his Skalds to strike up a song, which ran as follows:

“ Men of Eric!
Fierce and brave!
Array yourselves ere morning light;
With spear and shield,
For battle-field,
Deck yourselves for the coming fight!
Beauty's smile
Awaits awhile
To give the verdict of your fame;
O'er sea and land,
From distant strand,
Resounds the glorious Folko's name.
There, amidst the foe,
We his banner know,
Pressing onward for the fight!
Men of Eric!
Folko comes!
Battle with your utmost might !”

The wonderful strains floated over the heath, and reached Gabrielle's tent. She was well accustomed to hear her knight's fame celebrated on all sides; but when his

praises burst forth so gloriously under the sky of night from the lips of an enemy, she could scarcely refrain from falling on her knees before the great baron. But Folko, with courteous grace, raised her up, and pressing a fervent kiss on her soft hand, said: "To you, my lovely lady, belong my deeds, and not to me!"

As the night passed away, and the morning glowed in the east, Niflung's Heath was full of movement and sound of sparkling arms. Knights put on their clashing armor, noble steeds neighed, the morning draught went round in shining goblets of gold and silver, and war-songs and harp-notes resounded everywhere. A merry march played on horns rose from Biörn's camp. Montfaucon, with his horsemen and retainers, clad in blue steel armor, conducted his lady to a height on which she would be secure from the flying spears, and could have a free survey of the battle-field. The lights of morning played as it were in homage over her beauty, and as she passed close by the camp of Eric Jarl, his men lowered their arms, and the officers bent low their plumed helmets. Two of Montfaucon's pages remained on the height in attendance on Gabrielle, not unwillingly restraining their love of fighting for an office so agreeable. Then the two hosts passed in front of her, saluting her and singing to her as they went; and, placing themselves in battle array, the fight began.

The spears of the Northmen, hurled by powerful hands, rebounded with a clash from the broad shields opposed to them, or met whizzing in their flight; and now and then, both in Biörn's and Eric's hosts, a warrior was struck, and fell silent to the ground.

Then the Knight Folko of Montfaucon advanced with his Norman horsemen. As he dashed by, he lowered his sword to salute Gabrielle; and then, raising a general exulting battle-cry, he charged the left wing of the enemy.

Eric's foot-soldiers, resting firmly on their knees, received them with fixed halberds; many a noble horse fell fatally wounded, bringing his rider with him to the ground; many another in his death-fall crushed his enemy beneath him. Folko rushed through—he and his war-steed unwounded—and a troop of chosen knights followed him. Disorder was already raging in the hostile camp; the soldiers of Biörn of the Fiery Eyes were already raising shouts of victory, when a troop of horse headed by Eric Jarl, advanced against the great baron, and while Montfaucon's Normans, hastily assembled, were engaged in dispersing these new ranks, the enemy's infantry were gradually gathering into a dense mass, rolling on and on. All this seemed occasioned by the wonderfully shrill cry of a warrior who appeared in their midst. And scarcely had this strange array been formed than the troops scattered again in all directions with loud war-cries, and with a force as irresistible as that with which Hecla sends forth the burning stream from its unfathomable abyss. Biörn's soldiers, who thought to surround the enemy, wavered and fell, and gave way before such inconceivable fury. In vain the Knight Biörn endeavored to oppose the stream—he was himself almost carried away in the general flight.

Mute and motionless, Sintram gazed at the tumult. Friend and foe passed him by, each alike avoiding him, and none willing to have anything to do with him, so fearful and so unearthly was his aspect of silent rage. He too struck neither right nor left; his battle-ax rested in his hand. But his eyes flashed with fire, and seemed piercing the enemy's ranks, as though he would find out him who had stirred up the warlike fury. He succeeded. A little man, in strange-looking armor, with large golden horns on his helmet, and a projecting visor attached to it, was leaning on a two-edged halberd shaped like a sickle, and looked hither and thither as if with a smile of derision at the vic-

torious pursuit of Eric's troops and the flight of their adversaries. "That is he!" exclaimed Sintram; "that is he who will drive us like fugitives before Gabrielle's eyes!" And with the swiftness of an arrow he darted toward him with a wild shout.

The combat began with fury, but it lasted only a short time. Defying the bold dexterity of his adversary, Sintram, taking advantage of his superior size, struck so fearful a blow upon the horned helmet that a stream of blood gushed forth, the little man fell groaning, and after a few frightful convulsive movements stretched out his limbs as if stiffening in death.

His fall appeared to determine that of Eric's army. Even those who had not seen his defeat suddenly lost courage and eagerness for fight, and retreated with uncertain step, or ran in wild desperation upon the halberds of the enemy. At the same time, Montfaucon had dispersed Eric Jarl's cavalry after a desperate conflict, and having dragged Eric himself from his saddle, had taken him prisoner with his own hand. Biörn of the Fiery Eyes stood victorious in the midst of the field. The day was won.

CHAPTER X.

CONDUCTED by the great baron, in the presence of the whole army, with glowing cheek and humble downcast look, Sintram ascended the hill where Gabrielle stood in all her radiant beauty. Both warriors bent on their knees before her, and Folko said solemnly: "Lady, this young combatant of noble race merits the reward of this day's victory. I pray you, let him receive it from your fair hand."

Gabrielle bowed courteously, disengaged her velvet scarf of blue and gold, and fastened it to a gleaming sword

which a page brought her on a cushion of cloth of silver. Then with a smile she held out the noble gift to Sintram, who was just bending forward to receive it, when Gabrielle suddenly paused, and turning to Folko, said: "Noble baron, should not one on whom I bestow sword and scarf be first admitted to the order of knighthood?"

Light as a feather, Folko sprung up, bowed low before his lady, and with solemn dignity gave the youth the accolade of knighthood. Then Gabrielle invested him with the sword, saying: "For the honor of God and virtuous ladies, my young hero. I saw you fight, I saw you conquer, and my hearty prayer followed you. Fight and conquer often again, as you have done to-day, that the beams of your fame may shine even to my far-distant country."

And at a sign from Folko, she offered her tender lips for the new knight to kiss.

Thrilling with ardor, but as if sanctified for service, Sintram arose in silence, hot tears streaming down his softened countenance as the acclamations and trumpets of the assembled armies greeted the ennobled youth with deafening applause.

The old Rolf stood, however, calmly aside, and as he looked in the mild beaming eyes of his young charge, he said, in a voice of glad thanksgiving:

" All strife hath now an end,
Rich gifts doth Heaven send !
The evil foe is slain !"

Biörn and Eric Jarl had meanwhile been conversing together eagerly but not uncourteously. The victor now led his vanquished foe up the hill, and presented him to the baron and Gabrielle, saying: "Instead of two enemies, we are now two sworn allies; and I pray you, my dear

guests and kinsfolk, that you also will receive him with gracious favor, as one who henceforth belongs to us."

"Who has done so always," added Eric, smiling. "I have indeed attempted revenge; but, defeated by land and water, one gets satisfied at last. And I thank God that I have not yielded ingloriously, either in the Grecian seas in battle with the sea-king, or on Niflung's Heath with you." Folko of Montfaucon gave a ready assent to this by cordially shaking his hand, and the reconciliation was solemnly and heartily made. Eric Jarl then addressed Gabrielle with such noble and courteous grace that she gazed on the hoary gigantic hero with a smile of wonder, and offered him her beautiful hand to kiss.

Sintram meanwhile was engaged in earnest conversation with the good Rolf, and at length the words caught the ears of others: "But before all, bury that wonderfully brave knight whom my battle-ax smote. Seek out the greenest mound for his resting-place, and the most magnificent oak to overshadow it; also, first open his visor and look carefully at his face, that though mortally wounded we may not bury him alive; and moreover, that you may be able to inform me of the appearance of one to whom I owe this most glorious of all prizes of victory.

Rolf bowed kindly, and went away.

"Our young knight is inquiring there"—said Folka, turning to Eric Jarl—"about a slain warrior of whom I would gladly hear more. Who, my dear sir, was that wonderful captain who led on your infantry in such a masterly manner, and who scarcely yielded before Sintram's powerful battle-ax?"

"You ask me more than I really can myself answer," replied Eric Jarl. "It is about three nights ago that the stranger joined me. I was sitting one evening with my fellow-warriors round the hearth; we were forging our

armor and singing over our work. Suddenly, above the sound of the hammer and the song, we heard a noise so powerful that we at once became silent, and sat motionless as if turned into stone. Before long the sound was repeated, and we perceived that the noise must come from an immense horn which some one was blowing outside the castle, demanding admittance. I then went myself down to the castle-gate, and as I passed through the court-yard all my dogs were so terrified by the strange noise that instead of barking they were whining and crouching in their kennels. I scolded them, and called to them, but even the boldest would not follow me. 'I will show you then,' thought I, 'the way to set to work;' and I grasped my sword firmly, placed my torch close beside me on the ground, and let the portals open without further delay. For I knew well that it would be no easy matter for any one to enter without my will."

"A loud laugh greeted me from without, and I heard the words: 'Well, well! these are mighty preparations indeed for giving one little man the hospitable shelter he desires!' And indeed I felt a blush of shame come over me as I saw the small stranger standing quite alone opposite to me. I begged him to come in at once, and offered him my hand; but he still seemed too indignant, and would not give me his own in return. On his way into the castle, however, he became more friendly, and showed me, moreover, the golden horn which he had blown; he had another too of the same kind, and he wore both screwed on his helmet.

"When we were together in the hall, he behaved in a very strange manner. Sometimes he was merry, sometimes cross, sometimes courteous, and sometimes jeering, without any one being able to see why he was thus varying every moment. I would gladly have inquired from whence he came, but how could I ask my guest such a question?

So far he told us himself, that he was thoroughly frozen in our countries, and that in his own he was much warmer. He also seemed well acquainted with the imperial city of Constantinople, and he related fearful stories of how brother against brother, uncle against nephew, and even father against son, had thrust each other from the throne, blinding, cutting out tongues and murdering. At last he mentioned his own name; it sounded Greek and noble, but none of us could retain it.

“Soon, however, he showed himself to be an excellent armorer. He understood how to handle the red-hot iron lightly and boldly, and to fashion it into form, and indeed into one of the most murderous weapons of which I have ever heard. This, nevertheless, I forbade, for I was resolved to meet you in the field with equal arms, and with such as are in use in our northern country. He laughed and said we could be victorious without them; with skillful movements and the like: I was only to intrust him with the command of my infantry, and I was certain of victory. I thought to myself a good armorer of weapons is a good handler of weapons, still I desired some test of his powers. My lords, the skill he then exhibited in trials of strength is not to be conceived, and although the young Sintram is famed far and wide as a brave and mighty warrior, still I can scarcely imagine that he could kill such a one as my Greek ally.”

He would have continued speaking, but the good Rolf came hastily back with some squires, and all looked so deadly pale that every eye was involuntarily turned to them with anxious expectation as to the tidings he had brought. Rolf stood still, trembling and silent.

“Courage, my old friend!” said Sintram. “Whatever you may have to tell, everything from your faithful lips is truth and light.”

“Sir knight,” began the old man, “do not be angry,

but the strange warrior whom you slew to-day we could not possibly bury. Had we only not opened that visor—that hideous projecting visor! For so horrible a countenance grinned from beneath it, so fearfully distorted by death, that we scarcely kept our senses. God forbid that we should have touched him. Far rather send me to kill bears and wolves in the deserts, and let me look on while eagles, vultures and hawks revel on their carcasses.”

All present shuddered and remained for some time silent. At length Sintram regained courage and said: “Dear old man, whence come these wild words—such as these until now have been ever so alien and abhorrent to you? And you, Sir Eric, did your Grecian ally appear to you so terrible also when alive?”

“That I know not,” replied Eric Jarl, casting a glance of inquiry round the circle of his comrades and retainers. They confirmed his words. Only at last it appeared that neither chieftain, nor knight, nor soldiery could accurately say what the stranger was like.

“Then we will find it out for ourselves, and at the same time bury the corpse,” said Sintram, courteously signing to the whole assembled party to follow him. All did so except Montfaucon, whom the fearful entreaties of Gabrielle kept at her side.

He lost nothing thereby. For though Niflung’s Heath was searched in all directions twenty times over, the body of the strange warrior was no longer to be found.

CHAPTER XI.

THE joyful calmness which had come over Sintram on this day seemed to be more than a passing gleam. Even though at times a remembrance of the Knight Paris and Helena would inflame his heart with wilder and bolder

aspirations, it needed only one glance at scarf and sword, and the stream of his inner life would glide on again with clear and mirror-like calmness.

"What can a man wish for beyond what has already been bestowed upon me?" he would often say to himself in quiet delight.

Matters thus went on for a long time. The beautiful northern autumn had already begun to redden the leaves of the oaks and elms around the castle, when one day he was sitting with Folko and Gabrielle, almost in the very same spot in the garden at which he had before encountered that mysterious being, whom he, without knowing why, had called the little master. But on this day how different was the aspect of everything. The sun was sinking calmly and brightly toward the sea, the evening mist, the token of an autumnal fog, was rising over the meadows and fields around the castle-hill. Presently Gabrielle, placing her lute in Sintram's hands, said:

"Dear friend, so gentle and mild as you now always are, I may surely intrust you with my delicate instrument. Sing to it your song of that land of flowers. I feel as if on my lute it would sound far sweeter than when accompanied with the vibrations of your fearful harp."

The young knight bowed courteously, and obeyed the lady's command.

Softly, and with unwonted grace, the tones resounded from his lips, and the wild song seemed to be transformed and to blossom like some garden of the blessed. Gabrielle's eyes were suffused with tears, and Sintram, singing more and more delightfully in his ardent longings, gazed at their pearly brightness. When the last chords were sounding, Gabrielle's voice repeated like some angel's echo:

"Heigh-ho for the land with the beautiful flowers!" Sintram put down the lute and heaved a sigh as he looked up thankfully toward the stars, now appearing in the heavens.

Then Gabrielle, turning toward her lord, whispered: "Oh how long, how long, have we now been away from our own glorious castles and our blooming gardens! Oh! that land with the beautiful flowers!"

Sintram scarcely knew whether he heard aright, so utterly did he at once feel himself shut out from Paradise. His last hope too vanished before Folko's courteous assurances that he would hasten to fulfill his lady's wishes the very next week, and that their vessel was already lying off the shore ready for sailing. She thanked him with a kiss, softly imprinted on his forehead, and walked up the ascent toward the castle, resting on her husband's arm, smiling and singing. Sintram, dejected in mind, and as if turned into stone, remained behind forgotten.

At length, when night had darkened the sky, he started up wildly, and ran up and down the garden with all his former madness, rushing out at last into the wild moonlit hills.

There he suffered his sword to clash against tree and bush, so that all around him there was a sound of crashing and falling, and the night-birds flew about him screaming and whistling in wild alarm, and stag and doe sprang away into the deepest coverts of the wilderness.

Suddenly the old Rolf stood before him; he was on his way back from a visit to the chaplain of Drontheim, to whom he had been relating with tears of joy how Sintram had been softened by Gabrielle's angelic presence, ay, almost cured, and how he ventured to hope that the evil dream had yielded. And now the whizzing sword of the furious youth had well-nigh unwittingly wounded the good old man. He stood still with folded hands, and sighed forth from the very depths of his heart: "Oh! Sintram, my foster-child, the darling of my heart, what has come over thee to excite thee to this terrible rage?"

The youth stood for a time as if spell-bound, gazing at

his aged friend sadly and pensively, with eyes that looked like expiring watch-fires, shining through a thick mist. At length he sighed, and said scarcely audibly:

“Good Rolf, good Rolf, go away from me! I am not at home in thy garden of heaven, and if sometimes a kindly breeze blow open its golden gates for me, so that I may look in at the flowery meadow-land, where the good angels dwell, there comes at once an icy cold north wind between me and them, and the sounding portals close, and I remain outside alone in endless winter.”

“Dear young knight, oh! listen to me, oh! listen to the good angel within yourself! Do you not bear in your hand the same sword with which the pure lady girded you? Does not her scarf move over your furious breast? Do you not remember? You used to say that no man could desire more than had been bestowed on you!”

“Yes, Rolf, I have said that,” replied Sintram, falling on the autumn moss with a flood of tears. The tears, too, ran down the old man’s face to his white beard.

After a time the youth rose again; he ceased to weep, but his looks were fearful, cold and wrathful; and he said: “See, Rolf, I have passed blessed and peaceful days, and I thought all the powers of evil within me were forever stifled and dead. It might, perchance, have been so, just as it would ever be day if the sun were always in the heavens. But ask this poor dark earth, why she looks so gloomy! Encourage her to smile as she was wont to do! Old man, she can no longer smile, and now that the gentle compassionate moon has passed behind the clouds with her holy funeral veil, she cannot even any longer weep; and in the hour of darkness every terrible feeling and every mad impulse wakens up, and I tell thee, disturb me not, disturb me not! Hurra! behind there, behind there, is the pale moon!”

His voice had almost fallen into a murmur at these last

words. Storm-like, he tore himself away from the trembling old man, and rushed away through the forest.

Rolf knelt down and wept and prayed silently.

CHAPTER XII.

WHERE the sea-shore rises most steeply and abruptly under three half-withered oaks said to have been the scene of human sacrifices in heathen ages, Sintram stood, leaning solitary and exhausted on his drawn sword, alone in the moonlit night. He looked out upon the distant heaving of the waves, and the pale beams of the moon, quivering between the branches of the trees, fell upon his motionless figure, making him appear like some fearful phantom.

Presently some one partly raised himself from the tall yellow grass on his left, and groaning faintly laid down again.

The following strange conversation, however, began between the two companions:

"Thou there, who movest thyself so mysteriously in the grass, dost thou belong to the living or to the dead?"

"As one chooses to take it. To heaven and to joy I am dead; to hell and to anguish I live."

"Methinks I have heard thee before."

"Yes."

"Thou art perhaps a troubled spirit, and thy life blood was here perhaps poured out in sacrifice to idols!"

"I am a troubled spirit, but no one has shed my blood, and no one can shed it. But they have hurled me down—ugh! into what a fearful abyss."

"And thou didst break thy neck there?"

"I live, and I shall live longer than thou."

"Thou almost seemest to me like the crazy pilgrim with the dead men's bones."

"I am not he, although we often hold company together; ay! oftentimes we have close and friendly intercourse. But between ourselves, I regard him also as mad. If I sometimes urge him on, and say: 'Take!' then he considers, and points upward to the stars; and then again, if I sometimes say: 'Take not!' then for the most part he will seize awkwardly, and he is able to destroy my best delights and pleasures. But nevertheless we keep up a sort of brotherhood in arms, and are indeed all but kinsmen."

"Give me thy hand, that I may help thee up."

"Oh ho! my officious young sir, that might bring you little good. But in truth, you're already helping me to rise. Give heed a bit."

Wild and more wildly the form struggled on the ground; thick clouds hurried over the moon and stars on a long unknown journey, and Sintram's thoughts chased each other in a no less wonderful course wholly unrestrained, and far and near the grass and trees rustled awfully. At length the mysterious being had raised himself. As if with fearful curiosity the moon through a rent in the clouds cast a gleam upon Sintram's companion, making it evident to the shuddering youth that the little master stood beside him.

"Avaunt!" cried he, "I will hear nothing further of thy evil stories of the Knight Paris. I should be driven quite mad at the end."

"It doesn't need stories of the Knight Paris for that!" laughed the little master. "It is enough that the Helen of thy heart is traveling toward Montfaucon. Believe me thou art a victim to madness already. Or wouldst thou that she should remain? Then thou must be more courteous toward me than thou art now."

And so saying, the little master raised his voice with such angry violence toward the sea that Sintram could

not refrain from shuddering at the dwarf. But he chid himself at once for the feeling, and convulsively grasping his sword-hilt with both his hands, he said scornfully:

"Thou and Gabrielle! What acquaintance hast thou then with Gabrielle?"

"Not much," was the answer returned. At the same time the little master evidently trembled with fear and anger, and at length he said: "I cannot endure the name of thy Helen, do not repeat it to me ten times in a breath. But suppose the tempest were to rise? If the waves were to swell and roll, forming a foaming circle round the coast of Norway? Then the voyage to Montfaucon could not be thought of, and thy Helen would remain here at least through the whole long dark winter!"

"If! if!" replied Sintram, contemptuously. "Is the sea then thy slave? Are the storms thy fellows?"

"They are rebels to me! Accursed rebels!" murmured the little master in his red beard. "Thou must help me, Sir Sintram, if I am to control them; but thou hast again no heart for that."

"Boaster! Provoking boaster!" exclaimed the youth, "what dost thou desire of me?"

"Not much, sir knight, not much for one who has power and ardor of soul. Thou hast only to look steadily and keenly out over the sea for one half-hour, and not to cease wishing with all thy might that it should foam and rage and swell and never rest till the icy hand of winter is on your mountains. That season in itself, is sufficient to delay the voyage of Duke Menelaus to Montfaucon. And give me also a lock of thy black hair. It is flying as wildly about thee as ravens' and vultures' wings."

The youth drew his sharp dagger, madly cut off a lock of his hair, threw it to the stranger, and according to his desire gazed with earnest wishing over the expanse of sea.

And softly, quite softly, the waters began to be troubled,

just as one whispers when anxious dreams come on, and when one longs to rest and cannot. Sintram was on the point of giving up; but in the moonlight he perceived a vessel sailing with white-swelling sails toward the south. The fear of seeing Gabrielle soon thus sailing away came over him; and ever wishing with increasing power, he fixed his eyes upon the watery abyss. Sintram, alas Sintram, art thou indeed the same being who but lately wast gazing on the moistened eyes of thy angelic lady?

And the waves swelled more mightily, and the storm swept whistling and howling over the ocean; the breakers white with foam were already visible in the moonlight.

Then the little master threw the lock of Sintram's hair up toward the clouds, and as it fluttered and floated away in the breeze the tempest rose so angrily that sea and sky were blended in one dense mist, and far off might be heard the cries of distress from many a sinking vessel.

But the crazy pilgrim with the dead men's bones passed close by the shore in the midst of the waters, gigantic in stature, and rocking terribly; the boat in which he stood was not visible, so mightily raged the waves round about it.

"Thou must save him, little master, thou must save him most surely," cried Sintram, in a tone of angry entreaty, through the tumult of the winds and waves; but the little master replied with a laugh:

"Be at rest as regards him, he will be able to save himself. The waves cannot harm him. Dost thou see? They are only begging him, and that is why they toss so boldly around him. And he gives them rich alms, very rich; I can assure you that."

Indeed it seemed as if the pilgrim were strewing dead men's bones into the waters, and then passed scathless on his way.

Sintram felt a horrid shudder pass through him, and he

rushed wildly toward the castle. His companion had vanished.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN the castle, Biörn and Gabrielle and Folko of Montfauncon were sitting round the stone table, from which, since the arrival of the noble guests, those suits of armor had been removed, which had formerly been the silent companions of the lord of the castle, and had been placed all together in a heap in the adjoining apartment.

On this day, while the storm had been rattling so furiously against the doors and windows, it seemed as if the old armor in the adjoining room had also been stirring, and Gabrielle several times rose with alarm and fixed her beautiful eyes fearfully on the little iron door, as though she presently expected to see an armed specter issue from it, bending with his mighty helmet through the low vaulted door-way.

Knight Biörn smiled grimly at her, and said as if he had guessed her thoughts: "Oh, he will never come out from thence again: at last I have put an end to that."

His guests stared at him doubtingly; but with an air of fearful indifference—it seemed as if the tempest had awakened the storm of rage within his own heart—he began the following narration:

"I was once also a happy man, I have smiled as you do, and could rejoice in the morning as you do; it was before the hypocritical chaplain had so bewildered the wise mind of my beautiful wife with his canting piety, that at last she retired into a convent, and left me alone with our wild son. That indeed was not right in the lovely Verena. Well, in her blooming glad youth before I knew her, many knights had sought her hand; among others, Sir Weigand the

Slender, and to him the fair maiden showed herself most inclined to give a favorable hearing. Her parents well knew that Weigand's rank and power were almost equal to their own; his early renown in arms moreover was free from all reproach, so that Verena and he were almost regarded as affianced.

"It happened one day that they were both walking together in the garden, and a shepherd was just driving his sheep up the mountain outside. The maiden saw among the flock a little snow-white lamb, skipping so gracefully and merrily about that she longed to have it. Weigand at once vaulted over the railing, hastened after the shepherd, and offered him two gold bracelets for the little animal. But the shepherd would not part with it; he scarcely listened to the knight, but quietly continued his way up the mountain, with Weigand closely following him. At length Weigand lost his patience. He threatened, and the shepherd, sturdily and proudly, like all of his race in our northern lands, threatened in return. Suddenly Weigand's sword clashed upon his head. He had intended the weapon to have fallen flat; but who can control a fiery steed or a drawn sword? The bleeding shepherd with his skull cloven fell down the precipice; his flock bleated fearfully over the mountains. The little lamb alone ran in its terror toward the garden, pushed itself through the railings, and as if imploring help lay down at Verena's feet, red with its master's blood. She took it in her arms, and from that hour never allowed Weigand the Slender to appear again before her face.

"She now always cherished the little lamb, and had no pleasure in anything else in the world, and she grew pale and turned her gaze heavenward like the lilies. She would even at that time have taken the veil, but just then I came to help her father in a bloody feud and rescued him from his enemies. This the old man represented to her, and, softly smiling, she gave me her beautiful hand.

“Poor Weigand’s grief would not allow him to remain any longer in his own country. It drove him forth as a pilgrim to Asia, whence our forefathers came, and he is said to have done wonderful deeds there, both of valor and humility. Indeed, my heart used to feel strangely weak at that time whenever I heard him talked of.

“After some years he returned and wished to build a church and a monastery on that mountain toward the west yonder, from whence the walls of my castle are distinctly visible. It is said that he wished to be consecrated as a priest there himself, but matters fell out otherwise.

“For some pirate vessels had sailed from the southern seas, and hearing of the building of this monastery, the captain imagined that he should find much gold belonging to the lord of the castle and to the master-builders, or else, that if he surprised and carried them off, a mighty ransom was to be extorted from them. He could have known but little of northern courage and northern weapons, but that knowledge was speedily obtained.

“Having landed in that bay under the black rocks, he reached the site of the building by circuitous paths, surrounded it, and fancied that the chief matter was now done. But hurra! Weigand and his builders rushed upon them with swords, hammers and axes. The heathens fled away to their ships, Weigand following them to take revenge.

“On his way he passed by our castle, and just as he caught sight of Verena on the terrace, and, for the first time after many years, she courteously acknowledged the salutation of the glowing victor, a dagger, hurled back by one of the fugitive pirates, struck his uncovered head, and he fell bleeding and insensible to the ground.

“We completed the rout of the heathens. Then I ordered the wounded knight to be brought into the castle, and my pale Verena’s face glowed like lilies in the morn-

ing light, and Weigand opened his eyes with a smile at finding himself near her. He refused to be taken into any other room but the small one close by, where now the armor is placed; it felt to him, he said, like the little cell which he now hoped soon to inhabit in his quiet cloister. All was done according to his wish, my sweet Verena nursed him, and he seemed at first to be on the straight road to recovery, but his head remained weak and confused on the slightest emotion, his walk was rather a falling than a walking, and his face was pale as death. We could not let him go. He used to come out of the little door there, when we were sitting together of an evening, tottering along into the hall; and my heart was often sad and wrathful, when Verena's sweet eyes beamed so softly toward him, and a blush like the glow of evening would suffuse her lily cheeks. But I bore it, I could have borne it to the end of our lives. Alas, then Verena went into a cloister!"

He fell so heavily upon his folded hands that the stone table seemed to groan beneath it, and he remained a long while motionless as one dead. When he again raised himself his fiery eye glanced fearfully and angrily round the hall, and at length he said to Folko:

"Your beloved Hamburgers, Gotthard Lenz and his son Rudlieb, they are to blame for this! Who bid them be cast ashore here, so close to my castle!"

Folko cast a piercing look on him, and was on the point of making a fearful inquiry; but another look at the trembling Gabrielle bade him be silent, at least for the present, and the Knight Biörn continued his narrative as follows:

"Verena was with her nuns, and I was alone, and my sorrow had driven me all day long wandering through forest and brook and mountain. Then in the twilight I came back to my desolate castle, and scarcely had I entered

the hall than the little door creaked and Weigand, who had slept through all, glided toward me, asking: 'Where then is Verena?' Then I became almost mad, and I howled to him with a laugh: 'She is gone mad, and so am I, and so are you, and now we are all mad!' Merciful heaven! the wound on his head burst open, and a dark stream flowed over his face—alas! how different from the redness when Verena met him at the castle gate!—and he raved, and rushed out into the wilderness, and has wandered about there ever since as a crazy pilgrim."

He was silent, and Gabrielle was silent, and Folko was silent, all three cold and pale, like images of the dead. At last the fearful narrator added in a low voice and as if thoroughly exhausted: "He has visited me here since then, but he will never come again through the little door. Have I not established peace and order in my castle?"

CHAPTER XIV.

SINTRAM had not yet returned when the inmates of the castle retired to rest in deep bewilderment. No one was even thinking of him, for every heart was battling with strange forebodings and uncertain cares. Even the heroic breast of Knight Folko of Montfaucon heaved with debating thoughts.

Old Rolf still remained without, weeping in the forest, exposing his gray head heedless of the storm, and waiting for his young master. But he had gone a very different way. It was not till morning dawned that he entered the castle from the opposite direction.

Gabrielle had slumbered sweetly through the night. It was as if angels with golden wings had fanned away the wild stories of the previous evening, and had wafted before her instead bright visions of the flowers and mirror-like

lakes and green hills of her home. She smiled and breathed calmly, while without the magic storm raged howling over the woods and battled with the agitated sea.

But in truth, when she awoke on the following morning, and still heard the windows rattling, and saw the clouds, as if dissolved in mist and steam, still concealing the face of heaven, she could have wept with dismay and sadness, especially as Folko had already quitted their apartments, and this—so her maidens informed her—clad in full armor. At the same time she heard the tramp of armed men resounding in the halls, and upon inquiry she learned that the lord of Montfaucon had summoned all his retainers to be in readiness to protect their lady.

Wrapped in her ermine mantle, she almost looked in her fear like some tender flower just blooming above the snow, and tottering before the winter's storms. Presently Sir Folko entered in all the splendor of his gleaming armor, peacefully carrying his golden helmet with its waving plume under his arm, and greeting Gabrielle with an air of cheerful serenity. At a sign from him her maidens retired, and the men-at-arms without were heard quietly dispersing.

"Lady," said he, as he led her to a couch and took his seat beside her, while she already seemed reassured by his presence; "Lady, will you forgive your knight that he left you to endure some moments of anxiety, but honor and strict justice called him. Everything is now settled, and that quietly and peacefully; forget your fears, and whatever may have troubled you reckon now among the things that are no more."

"But you and Biörn?" asked Gabrielle.

"On my knightly word of honor," said Folko, "it is all well."

Then he began to talk of indifferent and cheerful matters with all his wonted grace and wit; but Gabrielle, bending toward him, said with deep emotion:

"Oh Folko, oh my knight, the flower of my life, my protector and my dearest treasure on earth, let me know everything if thou mayst. If, however, any given promise binds thee, that is another thing. Thou knowest that I am of the race of Portamour, and that I would ask nothing of my knight which could cast the slightest breath of suspicion upon his spotless shield."

Folko looked thoughtful for a moment, then smiling kindly at her, he said: "It is not that, Gabrielle. But wilt thou be able to bear what I have to announce to thee? Wilt thou not sink down under it as a slender fir bends beneath the burden of the snow?"

She raised herself somewhat proudly, and replied: "I have already reminded thee of my father's name. Let me only add that I am the wedded wife of the lord of Montfaucon."

"Be it so then," answered Folko, bowing solemnly. "And if that must some day come to the light which has nought to do with such deeds of darkness, it at least comes forth less fearfully by a sudden flash. Know then, Gabrielle, that the wicked knight who would have slain my friends Gotthard and Rudlieb, is none other than our host and kinsman, Biörn of the Fiery Eyes."

Gabrielle shuddered, and covered her face for a moment with her fair hands. Then, looking round with an air of amazement, she said: "I have heard falsely, although even yesterday such a foreboding struck me. Or did you not say just now that all was settled between you and Biörn, and that quietly and peacefully? Between the brave baron and such a man after such a crime?"

"You heard aright," replied Folko, gazing with hearty delight at his delicate yet high-minded lady. "This morning at earliest dawn I went to him and challenged him to mortal combat in the neighboring valley, if he were the man whose castle had well-nigh been the altar of sacrifice

to Gotthard and Rudlieb. He stood there already completely armed, and merely said: 'I am he!' and followed me to the forest. But when we were alone at the place of combat he hurled his shield from him down a giddy precipice, then cast his sword of battle after it, and then with two gigantic efforts he tore off his coat of mail, and said: 'Now, thrust at me, Sir Judge, for I am a heavy sinner, and I dare not fight with thee.' How dared I then attack him? Then a strange reconciliation was made between us. He is partly to be considered my vassal, and yet I solemnly absolved him from all payment in my own name and in that of my friends. He was contrite, and yet no tear was in his eye, and no friendly word crossed his lips. He was only oppressed with the sense of that strict justice which has invested me with this power, and Biörn is my vassal on that tenure. I know not, lady, whether you can bear to see us together in this manner, if not, I will seek some other castle as a residence for us; there are none, indeed, in Norway which would not receive us gladly and honorably, and this wild autumnal tempest may, perhaps, postpone our voyage for some time longer. Only this I think, that if we now depart, and in this manner, the heart of this wild man will break."

"Where my noble lord tarries, there will I also gladly tarry under his protection," replied Gabrielle; and again the greatness of her knight shone before her, and her heart glowed with rapture.

CHAPTER XV.

THE noble lady had just unbuckled her knight's armor with her own delicate hands—on the field of battle alone might pages or squires at her command have aught to do with Montfaucon's armor—and she was on the point of

throwing his azure gold-embroidered mantle over him, when the door was gently opened, and Sintram entered the room, bowing humbly.

At first Gabrielle gave him a kindly salutation, as was her wont; but, suddenly growing pale, she turned away and said: "For Heaven's sake, Sintram, how you look! And how can one single night have altered you so terribly?"

Sintram stood still, as if thunderstruck, not knowing himself rightly what had really befallen him.

Then Folko took him by the hand, and led him to a brightly-polished shield, and said very gravely: "Look at yourself in it, my young knight!"

Sintram drew back horrified at the first glance. It seemed to him as if he saw the little master before him, with that one single upright feather in his wonderful cap; but at length he perceived that the mirror was showing him himself alone and no one else, and that it was only the cut of his own wild dagger in his hair which had given him this strange, and, as he could not deny, specter-like aspect.

"Who has done that to you?" inquired Folko, still severely and gravely. "And what terror has made your wild and dishevelled hair thus stand on end?"

Sintram knew not what to reply. It seemed to him as though he were standing before a judgment-seat, and that he were about to be degraded from his knightly rank.

Suddenly Folko drew him away from the shield; and, leading him to the rattling window, asked: "Whence comes this tempest?"

Again Sintram was silent. His limbs began to tremble under him, and Gabrielle whispered, pale and terrified: "Oh, Folko, my knight, what has happened? Oh, tell me—are we indeed come into an enchanted castle?"

"Our native North," replied Folko, solemnly, "is rich

in many a secret art. We may not, for aill that, call its people enchanter; but the young man there has cause to watch himself narrowly; he whom the evil one has touched by so much as a hair——”

Sintram heard no more. He staggered groaning out of the room.

Outside he was met by old Rolf, still completely benumbed by the hail and tempest of the night. Only rejoicing to see his young master again, he left his disordered appearance unnoticed; but as he accompanied him to his sleeping apartment, he said: “Witches and spirits of the tempest must have carried on their pranks on the sea-shore. I know that such mighty changes in nature never take place without some devilish arts.”

Sintram fell into a swoon, and it was only with difficulty that Rolf could so far recover him as to enable him to appear in the great hall at the midday hour. But before he went down he ordered a shield to be brought, looked at himself in it, and with dismay and grief cut off with his dagger the rest of his long black hair, making himself almost look like a monk; and thus he joined the others, who were already sitting at table.

All looked at him with surprise; old Biörn, however, said, in a tone of bewilderment: “Will you also go from me to a cloister, like your fair mother?”

A commanding look from the lord of Montfaucon restrained any further outbreak; and, as if appeasingly, Biörn added, with a forced smile: “I only thought perhaps something had happened to him as to Absalom, and he had been obliged to part with his hair in rescuing himself from the meshes in which he was entangled.”

“You should not jest with holy things,” repeated the baron with severity, and all were silent; and immediately after the repast was ended Folko and Gabrielle retired to their apartments with a grave and courteous salutation.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIFE in the castle from henceforth assumed quite another form. Those two exalted beings, Folko and Gabrielle, remained for the most part in their apartments; and when they did appear, it was with calm dignity and silent seriousness, and Biörn and Sintram stood with humble awe before them. Nevertheless, the lord of the castle could not bear the thought that his guests should withdraw to any other knight's abode. Once when Folko spoke of it, something like a tear stood in the wild man's eye. He bowed his head, and said softly: "As you will. But I believe I shall wander among the rocks for days, if you go."

Thus they remained all together; for the storm and the sea continued to rage so furiously that no voyage was to be thought of, and the oldest man in Norway could not remember such an autumn. The priests consulted all the Runic documents, the Skalds looked through their songs and tales, and yet could find no record of a similar state of things.

Biörn and Sintram braved the tempest. During the few hours that Folko and Gabrielle showed themselves, the father and son were always in the castle, as if in respectful attendance; the rest of the day, and often through the whole night, they were rushing through the forests and among the rocks in pursuit of bears.

Folko meanwhile exerted all the charms of his mind and all the grace of his noble manners to make Gabrielle forget that she was dwelling in this wild castle, and that the severe Norwegian winter was already setting in, which would ice them in for several months. Sometimes he would relate pleasant tales, sometimes he would play lively melodies, begging Gabrielle to dance with her maidens to

his music; then again, presenting his lute to one of the women, he would himself mingle in the dance, ever taking occasion thereby to express some new act of devotion to his lady; then again, in the spacious halls of the castle, he would prepare martial exercises for his retainers, and Gabrielle would have some graceful reward to adjudge to the victor; often, too, he would himself join the circle of combatants, but so that he only met their attacks on the defensive, and thus deprived no one of the prize. The Norwegians who stood round as spectators, used to compare him with the demi-god Baldur, a hero of their old traditions, who was wont to let the darts of his comrades be directed against him for amusement, conscious of his invulnerable nature and of his strength.

Once at the close of one of these martial exercises, the old Rolf advanced toward Folko, and humbly beckoning him aside, said in a soft voice: "They call you the glorious and mighty Baldur, and they are right. But even the glorious and mighty Baldur died at last. Take heed to yourself."

Folko looked at him with astonishment.

"It is not," continued the old man, "that I know of any treachery, or that I could even remotely forebode any. God keep a Norwegian from such a fear. But as you stand before me in all the splendor of your glory, the fleet-ingness of all earthly things forces itself powerfully upon me, and I cannot help saying to you: Take heed, oh, take heed, noble baron! The brightest glory comes to an end."

"They are good and pious thoughts," replied Folko, kindly, "and I will treasure them in a pure heart, my faithful father."

The good Rolf was often with Folko and Gabrielle, and thus formed a link between the two widely different households in the castle. For how could he ever have forsaken his own Sintram! Only in the wild hunting expeditions,

through the raging storm and rain, he was no longer able to follow him.

The bright winter had at last set in with all its majesty. The return to Normandy was now in consequence impeded, and the magical storm was lulled. Brilliantly shone the hills and plains in their hoary attire; and Folko, with skates on his feet, would often carry his lady swiftly as the wind in a light sledge over the crystal-like frozen lakes and streams.

On the other hand, the bear-hunts of the lord of the castle and his son assumed a still more desperate, and to them, even more agreeable aspect.

About this time—when Christmas was drawing near, and Sintram was endeavoring to drown his fear of his wonted dreams by the wildest hunting expeditions—about this time Folko and Gabrielle were standing together on one of the terraces of the castle. It was a mild evening; the snow-clad country was glowing with the red light of the setting sun; from below, in the armorer's hall, might be heard men's voices singing over their beautiful work, songs of ancient heroic times. At length, however, the singing ceased, the beat of the hammer died away, and without being able either to see the speakers or to distinguish them by their voices, the following conversation arose:

“Who is the boldest among all those who trace their origin to our noble land?”

“Folko of Montfaucon.”

“Right, but tell me: is there then nothing from the performance of which even this great baron would not draw back?”

“Yes, indeed; there is one thing. And we, we who have always dwelt in Norway, pursue it gladly and readily.”

“And it is?”

“A bear-hunt in winter, down icy precipices and over trackless plains of snow.”

"Thou'rt right, my comrade. He who does not understand how to fasten our snow-shoes to his feet, nor how to turn on them in a moment to the right and left, may be indeed a mighty knight in other respects, but on our mountains and from our chase he is better away, tarrying with his pretty wife in her apartments."

A laugh of satisfaction followed this remark, and the speakers then resumed their ponderous work.

Folko remained for some time absorbed in thought. A glow, beyond that of the evening sky, reddened his cheek. Gabrielle too was silent, considering she knew not what. At last she recovered herself, and embracing her husband, she said: "To-morrow, you will go, will you not, on the bear-hunt, and bring your lady home the spoils of the chase?"

The knight bowed his assent with an air of gladness, and the rest of the evening was spent in dance and music.

CHAPTER XVII.

"SEE, noble lord," said Sintram the next morning, when Folko expressed his desire to accompany them, our snow-shoes, which we call *skier*, give wings to our course, so that we go down the mountain-side with the swiftness of the wind, and ascend it again with a speed which no one can follow, and on the plain no horse can keep pace with us; but they are only safe for the most practiced huntsman. It is as if some phantom-spirit dwelt in them, fearfully fatal to one who has not learned to use them from childhood."

Folko replied somewhat proudly: "Is this then the first time that I have been on your mountains? Years ago I joined in this sport, and, thank God, every knightly exercise soon becomes familiar to me."

Sintram ventured no further remonstrance, and still less the old Biörn. Both, too, felt more relieved when they saw with what skill and assurance Folko buckled the *skier* on his feet, without allowing any one to assist him. The party went up the mountains in pursuit of a fierce bear, which they had often threatened in vain. They were soon obliged to separate, and Sintram offered himself as companion to Folko. The baron, touched by the youth's deep humility and devotion, forgot everything which had lately appeared to him mysterious in the pale confused being before him, and gave a ready assent.

As they climbed higher and higher up the snowy mountain, overlooking from many a giddy peak the lower-lying crags and summits, which appeared like some ocean suddenly frozen or petrified by the wild storm, the noble Montfaucon drew his breath ever more freely and joyously. He sang war songs and love songs in the clear keen air, songs of his Frankish home, and the echo reverberated from rock to rock as if with surprise at the sound. At the same time, he climbed the heights and glided down them again in merry sport, strongly and securely using the supporting staff, and turning right and left as the fancy seized him; so that Sintram's former anxiety was changed into admiring astonishment, and the huntsmen, who still kept the baron in view, burst forth in loud applause, proclaiming far and wide the new achievements of their guest.

The good fortune which almost always accompanied the noble Folko in his deeds of arms seemed disinclined to leave him even now. After a short search, he and Sintram found distinct traces of the animal, and with glad and beating hearts followed them so swiftly that even a winged foe could scarcely have escaped their pursuit. But the beast of whom they were in search had no idea of flight. He lay sulkily in a cavern near the top of an

almost perpendicular rock, infuriated by the noise of the chase, and only awaiting in his lazy rage for some adversary to venture near enough for him to tear him to pieces. Folko and Sintram were now close by the rock, the rest were widely scattered over the mazy and dreary waste. The track led them upward, and the two companions climbed the rock on different sides, so that their prey could not escape them. Folko stood first on the solitary height and looked around him.

A vast boundless tract of snow stretched out untrodden before him, melting in the distance in the gloomy clouds of evening. He almost fancied that he had lost the track of the fearful beast.

Suddenly a low growl issued from the rocky cleft near him, and black and clumsy the bear rose from the snow, stood on its hind legs, and then advanced toward the baron with glaring eyes.

Sintram meanwhile was struggling in vain to ascend the rock, impeded by the masses of snow that were continually slipping down.

Glad of a combat, so long untried as almost to be wholly new to him, Sir Folko of Montfaucon leveled his spear and awaited the attack of the monster. He suffered it to approach quite near, so that it could almost touch him with its fierce claws; then he made a thrust and buried his lance deep in the bear's breast. But still the terrible beast pressed over onward, howling and roaring, though the cross-iron of the spear kept him on his hind legs, and the knight was obliged to plant his feet firmly in the ground to resist the furious assault, while close before him was the horrible bloody face of the animal and close in his ear its hoarse growl, wrung forth partly in the agony of death, and partly from desire for blood.

At last the bear's furious power grew weaker, and the dark blood streamed richly over the snow. He tottered;

one more powerful thrust threw him backward and hurled him down over the rocky precipices. At the same moment Sintram stood by the side of the baron of Montfaucon.

Folko drew a deep breath, and said: "I have not yet the prize of victory in my hands; and have it I must, so surely as I have succeeded in winning it. Only see, the shoe on my right foot seems to me injured. Do you think, Sintram, that it will hold for me to glide down over the precipice?"

"Rather let me go," said Sintram. "I will fetch you the bear's head and claws."

"A true knight," replied Folko, somewhat indignantly, "does not do a knightly deed by halves. I only ask you whether my snow-shoes will hold."

Sintram bent down to look, and was on the point of saying "no," when suddenly a voice close beside them said: "Why, yes, of course! there is no question about it!" Folko thought that Sintram had spoken, and glided down with the swiftness of an arrow, while his companion looked round with amazement. The hated form of the little master met his eye.

He was just on the point of angrily accosting him when he heard the sound of the baron's fearful fall, and stood speechless with horror. All was also silent and still in the abyss below.

"Now, what art thou waiting for?" said the little master after a pause. "He has broken his neck; go home to the castle and take the beautiful Helen to thyself."

Sintram shuddered. His hideous companion then began to extol Gabrielle's charms with such glowing, enchanting words that the youth felt his heart swell with a longing that he had never known before. He thought of his fallen comrade as nothing else than a partition removed between him and heaven, and he turned to the castle.

Presently a call resounded from the abyss. "My com-

rade, help! My comrade, help! I am still living, but I am sorely wounded."

Sintram was on the point of going down to him, and called out to the baron that he was coming; but the little master said: "There is no help for the shattered Duke Menelaus, and the fair Helen knows it already. She is only waiting for Knight Paris to come to comfort her." And with detestable cunning he interwove the legend into reality, introducing his highly wrought praises of the beautiful lady; and alas! the dazzled youth yielded to him and fled.

Distinctly he still heard from afar the baron's call: "Knight Sintram! Knight Sintram! thou on whom I bestowed the holy order, haste to me and help me! The she-bear is coming with her whelps, and my arm is useless! Knight Sintram! Knight Sintram! hasten to me and help me!"

His cry was drowned by the furious speed with which Sintram and his companion hurried along in their snow-shoes and by the evil words of the little master, who ridiculed the pride with which Duke Menelaus had lately behaved toward the poor Sintram. At length he cried out: "Good luck to you, Mrs. Bear! good luck to you, you young whelps! you will have a delicious meal! you will feed upon the terror of heathendom, upon him at whose name the Moorish brides weep, the great baron of Montfaucon. Now no more, oh! thou dainty knight! now no more wilt thou shout at the head of thy troops: Mountjoy St. Denys!"

But scarcely had this holy name passed the lips of the little master than he raised a howl of anguish, writhed himself in horrible contortions, and at length, moaning and wringing his hands, vanished away in a storm of snow.

Sintram planted his staff in the ground and stood still. The vast expanse of snow, the distant mountains rising

above it, and the gloomy forests of fir—with what cold reproachful silence they all seemed to look at him! He felt as if he must sink under the weight of his misery and his guilt. The bell of a distant hermitage fell sadly on his ear.

Bursting into tears in the increasing night, he exclaimed: “My mother! my mother! I had once a dear careful mother, and she said I was a good child!”

Then he felt a thought of comfort wafted to him as by angels that perhaps Montfaucon was not yet dead; and with the speed of lightning he fled back to the rock.

Having reached the terrible place, he bent down over the precipice, looking anxiously. The moon, just rising in all her splendor, helped him with her light.

There was the knight of Montfaucon, pale and bleeding, leaning, half-kneeling against the rock; his right arm hung crushed and powerless by his side; it was evident that he had not been able to draw his good sword from the scabbard. And yet he was keeping the bear and her whelps at bay with his proud eye and threatening aspect, so that they only crept round him, growling angrily: ready indeed at any moment for a fierce attack, and yet again retreating affrighted before the majestic figure of the defenseless victor.

“Oh! what a hero might have perished here!” sighed Sintram; “and alas! through whose fault.” And in an instant he had hurled his spear with so true an aim that the bear fell weltering in its blood, and the young ones ran howling away.

The baron looked up with surprise. His countenance shone with the light of the moon that beamed upon it, it looked grave and severe, and yet kindly, like some angelic vision. “Come down!” he signed, and Sintram glided carefully and hastily down the precipice. He was about to attend to the wounded man, but Folko said: “First take

off the head and claws of the bear which I killed. I have promised my beautiful Gabrielle the spoils of the chase. Then come to me and bind up my wounds; my right arm is broken."

Sintram did as the baron bade him. When the tokens of victory had been taken, and the fractured arm bound up, Folko desired the youth to assist him back to the castle.

"Oh, if I only dared to look you in the face!" said Sintram in a low voice, "or if I only knew how to approach you!"

"Thou wert indeed on a very evil course," replied Montfaucon, gravely, "but how should we men stand at all before God, if repentance did not help us! Thou must always be he who saved my life, and let that thought bring thee comfort."

The youth supported the baron gently and vigorously on his way, and both advanced silently in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOUNDS of wailing met them from the castle as they approached; the chapel was solemnly lighted up; within it knelt Gabrielle, sorrowing for the death of the knight of Montfaucon.

But how quickly was all changed, when the noble baron pale and bloody it is true, but escaped from all mortal peril, stood smilingly at the entrance of the holy building, and said in a soft, gentle voice: "Calm thyself, Gabrielle, and do not be frightened at seeing me, for, by the honor of my race, thy knight lives."

Oh! with what joy did Gabrielle's eyes sparkle as she looked at her knight, and then raised them again to heaven, still streaming with tears, but from the blessed source of

grateful joy! With the help of two pages, Folko sunk on his knees beside her, and both sanctified their happiness in silent prayer.

When they left the chapel, the wounded knight carefully supported by his beautiful lady, Sintram was standing in the darkness without, gloomy as the night, and shy as the nocturnal birds. Yet he stepped tremblingly forward in the light of the torches, laid the bear's head and claws at Gabrielle's feet, and said: "These are the spoils of to-day's chase, brought by the noble baron of Montfaucon for his lady." The Norwegians burst forth in shouts and acclamations at the stranger knight, who at his very first hunting expedition had slain the most splendid and fearful of all the beasts of prey on their mountains. Then Folko looked smilingly round the circle, and said: "Now, however, there are some of you who must not laugh again at me, if I stay at home sometimes with a pretty wife." But those who had spoken the day before in the armorer's hall, came forward, bowing low, and replied: "Noble sir, who could suppose that there was no knightly exercise in the whole world in which you would not show yourself mighty above all other men?"

"Something may be expected of the pupil of old Sir Hugh," returned Folko, kindly. "But now, brave northern heroes, praise my deliverer, also, for he rescued me from the claws of the she-bear, when I was leaning against the rock, wounded with my fall."

He pointed to Sintram, and the general shout of rejoicing again burst forth, and the old Rolf bowed his head over his foster-son's hand, with tears of joy sparkling in his eyes.

But Sintram drew back shudderingly. "Did you know," he said, "whom you have before you, all your lances would be leveled at my breast, and perhaps that would be the best thing for me. Yet I spare the honor of my father and

of his race, and for this time I will not confess. Only so much, noble Norwegians, must you know——”

“Young man,” interrupted Folko, with a look of reproof, “again so fierce and bewildered? I desire thee to be silent respecting thy dreaming fancies.” Sintram at first obeyed the baron’s order, but scarcely had the latter begun smilingly to ascend the castle steps, than he cried out: “Oh no, thou noble wounded hero, stay awhile! I will serve thee in everything that thy heart can desire; but in this I cannot serve thee. Ye noble Norwegians so much you shall and must know, that I am no longer worthy to tarry under the same roof with the great Folko of Mont-faucon and his angelic wife Gabrielle. And you, my aged father, good-night, and calm your longing for me. I intend to live in the stone castle on the Moon Rocks until things are in some way altered with me.”

There was something in his words which no one could venture to oppose, not even Folko. The wild Biörn bowed his head humbly and said: “Do according to thy pleasure, my poor son, for I fear that thou art right.”

Then Sintram walked solemnly and silently through the castle-gate, the good Rolf following him. Gabrielle led her exhausted lord up to his own apartments.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was a sad journey that of the youth and his aged foster-father to the Moon-Rocks, through the wild tangled paths of the valleys thick with snow and ice. Rolf now and then sang verses of hymns in which the repentant sinner is promised comfort and peace, and Sintram thanked him for them with looks of grateful sadness. Otherwise neither of them spoke a single word.

At last—it was already nearing dawn—Sintram broke

the long silence by saying: "Who are those two sitting there by the frozen stream? There is a tall man and a little one. Their own wild hearts have doubtless driven them also into the wilderness. Rolf, do you know them? I feel a dread of them."

"Sir," answered the old man, "your disturbed mind leads you astray. There is a tall fir-tree, and a little weather-beaten stump of an old oak, half-covered with snow, which gives it a strange appearance. There are no men sitting there."

"Rolf, look there then! look again carefully. They are moving—they are whispering together!"

"Sir, the morning wind moves the branches and rustles among the needle-pine leaves, and among the yellow oak leaves and blows up the crisp snow."

"Rolf, now they are both coming toward us; they are now standing quite close before us."

"Sir, it is we who in walking are approaching them, and the setting moon casts such quaint-like shadows across the valley."

"Good-evening," said a hollow voice, and Sintram recognized the crazy pilgrim, by whose side stood the malicious little master, looking more horrible than ever.

"You were right, sir knight," whispered Rolf, drawing behind Sintram, and making the sign of the cross on his breast and forehead.

The bewildered youth, however, advanced toward the two figures, and said: "You have always shown a marvelous pleasure in being my companions. What do you expect from it? And do you desire now to go with me to the stone fortress? I will tend thee there, poor pale pilgrim; and thee, horrible little master, most malicious of dwarfs, I will make thee shorter by a head as a reward for thy deeds yesterday."

"That would be a thing," laughed the little master.

"And thou wouldst imagine, perhaps, that thou hadst done a great service to the whole world! Yet indeed, who knows! Something might be gained by it. Only, poor fellow, thou canst not do it."

The pilgrim meanwhile was bowing his pale head to and fro thoughtfully, and saying: "I really believe thou wouldst gladly have me, and I too should gladly come, but I may not yet. Have patience awhile; come, I surely will, but at a distant time, and first we must together visit thy father, and then thou wilt also learn, poor friend, to call me by my name."

"Take heed of thwarting me again!" said the little master, threateningly, to the pilgrim; but he, pointing with his long withered hand toward the sun just rising, said: "Stay either that sun or me, if thou canst!"

The first rays just then fell upon the snow, and the little master ran muttering down a precipice; the pilgrim, however, walked on calmly and solemnly in the bright beams toward a neighboring mountain-castle. Not long after, the chapel-bell was heard tolling for the dead.

"For heaven's sake," whispered the good Rolf to his knight, "for heaven's sake, Sir Sintram, what sort of companions have you? The one cannot bear the light of God's beautiful sun, the other scarcely enters a dwelling before the death-knell follows his footsteps. Can he perhaps have been a murderer?"

"I do not think so," said Sintram. "He seems to me the best of the two. Only that he will not come to me is a strange piece of willfulness. Did I not invite him kindly? I imagine he sings well, and he should have sung some lullaby to me. Since my mother went into the cloister, no one sings me any more cradle songs."

His eyes were bedewed with tears at the tender recollection. But he did not know himself what he had said besides, for his mind was wild and confused.

They were approaching the Moon Rocks, and they ascended toward the stone fortress. The castellan, an old gloomy man, especially devoted to the young knight from his melancholy and dark wild deeds, hastened to let down the draw-bridge. Silently they exchanged greetings, and silently did Sintram enter, and the joyless portals closed with a crash behind the future anchorite.

CHAPTER XX.

YES, indeed, an anchorite, or at least something but little more social, did the poor Sintram now soon become! For toward the approaching holy Christmas festival his fearful dreams attacked him, and seized him this time so terribly that all the squires and servants fled screaming from the castle and would not venture back again. No one remained with him but Rolf and the old castellan.

Sintram, indeed, grew quiet again, but he went about looking so pale and still that he might have been taken for a moving corpse. No consolation from the good Rolf, no devout and pleasing song any longer availed to help; and the castellan, with his wild, scarred face, his head almost bald from some monstrous sword-cut, and his stubborn silence, was almost like a yet darker shadow of the unhappy knight. Rolf thought of summoning the holy chaplain of Drontheim, but how could he have left his master all alone with the gloomy castellan—a man who had at all times excited in him a secret feeling of dread. Biörn had long had the wild strange warrior in his service, and he honored him on account of his steady fidelity and his immense valor, without the knight or any one else knowing whence the castellan came and who he really was. Indeed, few people knew by what name to call him, but the knowledge seemed needless, as he never entered into

conversation with any one. He was just the castellan of the stone castle on the Moon Rocks, and nothing further.

Rolf committed his deep heart-felt cares to the merciful God, believing that He would help him, and the merciful God did help him.

For it was just on Christmas eve that the bell at the draw-bridge sounded, and when Rolf looked over the battlements, he saw the chaplain of Drontheim standing without, in strange company indeed, for by his side appeared the crazy pilgrim, and the dead men's bones on his dark mantle shone quite awfully in the glimmering starlight; but the presence of the chaplain filled the old Rolf with too much joy to allow much room for doubt; "besides," thought he, "whoever comes with him must be welcome!" and so he admitted them both with respectful haste, and conducted them up to the hall where Sintram was sitting pale and motionless under the light of a single flickering lamp. Rolf was obliged to support and help the crazy pilgrim up the stairs, for he was quite benumbed with cold.

"I bring you a greeting from your mother," said the chaplain as he entered, and a sweet smile at once passed over the young knight's countenance, and its deadly pallor gave place to a soft glow of red. "Oh heaven!" he murmured, "does my mother then still live, and does she wish also to know anything of me?"

"She is endowed with a great and mighty power of presentiment," replied the chaplain; "and whatever you either do or leave undone is mirrored in her mind—half-waking and half-dreaming—in many wonderful visions. She now knows of your deep sorrow, and she sends me, the father-confessor of her convent, hither to comfort you, but also at the same time to warn you, for as she asserts, and as I am inclined to believe, many and severe trials lie before you."

Sintram bowed, holding his arms still crossed over his

breast, and said with a gentle smile: "Much has been vouchsafed to me, more than I had ventured to hope in my boldest moments, ten thousand times more by my mother's greeting and your consolation, reverend sir; and all this after a fall more great and terrible than I have ever had before. The mercy of the Lord is great, and however severe the burden He may send for trial and expiation, I hope with His help to be able to bear it."

Just then the door opened, and the castellan entered with a torch, the red glare of which crimsoned his countenance. He looked terrified at the crazy pilgrim, who had just sunk fainting on a seat, supported and tended by Rolf; then he stared as if with amazement at the chaplain, and at length murmured: "Strange meeting! I believe the hour for confession and reconciliation is arrived."

"I believe so too," replied the holy father, who had heard the whispered words. "It seems, indeed, to be a day rich in grace and peace. This poor fellow here, whom I found half-frozen by the way, was more anxious to confess to me at once than to follow me to a hospitable hearth; do as he has done, my dark, fiery warrior, and delay not your good intention for one instant." So saying he left the room with the castellan, and, turning back at the door, exclaimed: "Knight and squire! take good care, meanwhile, of my sick charge."

Sintram and Rolf did as the chaplain desired, and when at length their cordials so revived the pilgrim that he opened his eyes again, the young knight said, with a friendly smile: "Seest thou, now thou'st come to visit me after all. Why didst thou refuse me when I invited thee so earnestly a few nights ago? I may have spoken, perhaps, somewhat wildly and hastily. Possibly thou wast thus frightened away."

A sudden expression of fear passed over the pilgrim's

countenance, but he immediately looked up again at Sintram with gentle humility, and said: "Oh dear, dear sir, I am most thoroughly devoted to you. Only do not speak always of the things which may have happened between you and me. It terrifies me whenever you do it. For, sir, either I am mad and have forgotten everything, or you met in the forest him whom I look upon as my most mighty twin-brother——"

Sintram laid his hand gently on the pilgrim's lips, and replied: "Do not say any more on the matter. I will gladly promise to be silent." Neither he nor old Rolf could understand why the whole thing appeared to them so awful, but they both trembled.

After a pause the pilgrim began: "I would rather sing you a song, a gentle consoling song. Have you not a lute at hand?"

Rolf fetched one, and the pilgrim, half-raising himself on the arm-chair, sang the following words:

"When the last end draweth nigh,
And heart and limbs are failing fast,
Then look on high,
Then turn above thy prayerful eye;
At Heaven's gate
Of mercy wait,
That God may help thee at the last.

"Seest thou how the East is gleaming?
Hear'st thou the bright angels singing
In the rosy blush of morn?
Thou wert so long in darkness dreaming,
And death is now a succor bringing,
On mercy's pinions borne.
Thou must give him kindly greeting,
And he cometh as a friend,
And by his welcome joyous meeting,
Placeth penance at an end,

“When the last end draweth nigh,
And heart and limbs are failing fast,
Then look on high,
Then turn above thy prayerful eye;
At Heaven’s gate
Of mercy wait,
That God may help thee at the last.”

“Amen!” said Sintram and Rolf, folding their hands, and as the last notes of the lute died away, the chaplain slowly and softly entered the hall with the castellan.

“I bring you a precious Christmas gift,” said the holy father. “After a long and bitter interval, peace of conscience and reconciliation are returning to a noble disturbed mind. It concerns thee, dear pilgrim; and Sintram, do thou, with joyful trust in God, take a refreshing example from it.”

“More than twenty years ago,” began the castellan, at a sign from the chaplain; “more than twenty years ago, I was driving my sheep up the mountains as a bold shepherd; a young knight followed me, whom they called Weigand the Slender; he wanted to buy my favorite lamb for his lovely bride, and he offered me plenty of glittering gold for it. I sturdily refused him. Impetuous youth was boiling within us both—a stroke of his sword hurled me senseless down the precipice.”

“Not killed?” cried the pilgrim, in a scarcely audible voice.

“I am no ghost,” replied the castellan, grimly; and then at a serious sign from the holy father, he continued in a more humble tone:

“I recovered slowly and in solitude, by the use of those remedies which were easily found by me, a shepherd, in our rich valleys. When I came forth again no one recognized me with my scarred face and my bald head. I heard a report through the country that on account of that deed

Weigand the Slender had been rejected by his beautiful betrothed Verena, that he had pined away, and that she had wished to retire into a convent, but that her father had persuaded her to marry the great Knight Biörn. Then a terrible desire for vengeance came into my heart, and I disowned my name and kindred and home, and as a strange wild man I entered the service of the mighty Biörn, thus suffering Weigand the Slender ever to be regarded as a murderer, and feasting on his anguish. So have I feasted on it, therefore, through all these long years; frightfully feasting on the idea of his self-banishment, of his cheerless return home, and of his madness. But to-day"—and a gush of hot tears fell from his eyes—"to-day God has broken the hardness of my heart, and dear Sir Knight Weigand, look upon yourself no longer as a murderer, and say that you will pardon me, and pray for him who has so terribly wronged you, and——"

Sobs choked his words. He fell down at the feet of the pilgrim, who embraced him with tears of joy and forgave him.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE elevated feelings of this hour passed from their holy and overpowering enthusiasm to the calm thoughtful aspect of daily life, and Weigand having now recovered, laid aside his mantle with the dead men's bones, saying: "I chose as a penance to carry these fearful remains about with me in the idea that some of them might belong to him whom I had murdered. Hence I sought for them deep in the beds of the mountain-torrents, and high up among the nests of the eagles and vultures. And in my search it seemed to me sometimes—could it have been only an illusion?—it seemed to me as if I met a being almost

like myself, but far, far more powerful, and yet still more pale and still more haggard."

An imploring glance from Sintram checked the flow of his words. Smiling gently, Weigand bent over him, and said:

"You now know the deep, the unutterably deep sorrow which has been gnawing at my heart. My shyness of you, and my hearty love for you, will no longer be a riddle to your warm and kindly feelings. For, young man, however much you may resemble your fearful father, you have your mother's gentle heart, and its reflection brightens your pale, severe features, like the rosy morning that casts its soft gleams of light over ice-covered mountains and snowy valleys. And alas! how long have you lived alone within yourself, though amid crowds of human beings! And how long now since you have seen your mother, my poor, dearly-loved Sintram?"

"I feel though," replied the youth, "as if a spring were gushing up in the barren wilderness; and I should perhaps be completely restored could I only longer retain you and weep with you, my dear sir. But I have already a sense within me that you will now soon be taken from me."

"I believe truly," said the pilgrim, "that my late song will be almost my last, and that it contained a prediction to be very very speedily fulfilled in me. But oh! as the soul of man is like an ever-thirsty soil—the more blessings bestowed on us by God, the more imploringly do we look for new ones—I would crave for yet one thing more before the blessed end I hope for comes. It will not indeed be granted me," he continued, with a failing voice, "for I feel myself too unworthy for so high a gift."

"It will nevertheless be granted you!" said the chaplain, in a loud and joyful tone. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted;" and I may surely venture to take one

purified from murder to receive a farewell from Verena's holy and forgiving countenance."

The pilgrim stretched both his hands up to heaven, and an unspoken prayer of gratitude poured from his beaming eyes and from the happy smile upon his lips. Sintram, however, looked sadly down, and whispered softly to himself: "Ah! could I but go with him!"

"Poor, good Sintram," said the chaplain, in a kind and gentle tone; "I have heard thy desire, but the time is not yet come. The powers of evil within thee may yet raise their wrathful heads, and Verena must restrain both her own and thy longing desire, until all is pure within thy spirit as it is in hers. Console thyself therefore with the thought that God is inclining toward thee, and that the longed-for peace will come—if not here, assuredly beyond the grave."

But the pilgrim, as if awaking from some trance of rapture, rose mightily from his seat, and said: "Will it please you to come forth with me, Sir Chaplain? Before the sun appears in the sky we can be at the convent gates; and even I shall be closely nearing heaven."

It was in vain that both the chaplain and Rolf represented to him his weariness; he smiled and said that there could be no talk of that now, and he girded himself and tuned the lute, which he requested to take with him as a companion by the way. His decided manner overcame all opposition, almost without words; and the chaplain had already prepared himself for the journey, when with much emotion the pilgrim looked at Sintram, who had fallen half-asleep on a couch, oppressed with a strange weariness, and said: "Wait a while. I know he desires a soft lullaby from me before we go." The youth's grateful smile seemed to say "Yes;" and the pilgrim, touching the strings with a light finger, sang:

- “ Sleep calmly, gentle boy!
To soothe thy tranquil slumbers,
Thy mother sends to thee
The song's beguiling numbers.
In silence and afar,
For thee she fondly prayeth,
And yearneth to be with thee,
Although the time delayeth.
- “ And when thou dost awake,
Give heed in all thou sayest,
In every act and deed
That thou her words obeyest.
Oh ! hear thy mother's voice,
Each yea, each nay, that's spoken,
And though temptation lurk,
Thy path is still unbroken.
- “ If thou dost rightly hearken,
Upon thine onward going.
Thy youthful brow will feel
Full many a zephyr blowing.
And on thy peaceful course,
Thou'lt know her fervent blessing,
And feel, though far divided,
The mother's fond caressing.
- “ Oh blessed light of life!
Mysterious consolation!
Whose heavenly power dispels
Each dread imagination.
Sleep calmly, gentle boy!
To soothe thy tranquil slumbers,
Thy mother sends to thee
The song's beguiling numbers.”

Sintram slept with a smile on his countenance, and breathing softly. Rolf and the castellan remained sitting by his bedside, while the two travelers pursued their way in a mild starlight night.

CHAPTER XXII.

DAY had nearly dawned, when Rolf who had been sleeping a little woke at the sound of some low singing, and on looking round he perceived with astonishment that it came from the lips of the castellan. The latter said, as if in explanation, "Sir Weigand is now singing this at the convent gate, and they are opening to him kindly," upon which the old Rolf again fell asleep, uncertain whether he had heard it waking, or in a dream.

After a while, however, the bright sunlight awakened him again, and when he rose up he saw the face of the castellan wonderfully illuminated by the rosy morning beams, and the whole countenance of the once fearful man shone with a kindly, nay almost child-like mildness. At the same time the strange man seemed listening in the quiet air as if he were hearing some most delightful discourse or glorious music, and when Rolf was on the point of speaking he signed to him entreatingly to be quiet, and remained absorbed in the same listening attitude.

At length he sank back slowly and contentedly in his seat, whispering: "Thank God she has granted his last request; he will be laid in the convent burial-ground, and now he has also forgiven me in the depth of his heart. I can tell you, his end is truly peaceful."

Rolf did not venture to ask a question, nor to awaken his master; he felt as if one already departed were speaking to him.

The castellan remained for some time still, and a bright smile spread over his face. At length he raised himself up a little, listened again, and said: "It is over, the bells sound very sweetly, we have overcome. Oh! how soft and easy does the good God make it!"

And so it was. He stretched himself wearily back, and his soul was freed from his careworn body.

Rolf now gently awakened his young knight, and pointed to the smiling dead. Sintram smiled too; and he and his good squire fell on their knees and prayed to God for the departed spirit. Then they rose, and bore the cold body into the vaulted hall, and watched by it with consecrated tapers until the chaplain should return. That the pilgrim would not come again, they knew well.

Toward midday the chaplain came back alone. He could only confirm what they already knew. He only added a comforting and hopeful greeting from Sintram's mother to her son, and told how the happy Weigand had fallen asleep like a weary child, while Verena had ever held the crucifix before him with calm tenderness.

"That God may help thee at the last,"

sang Sintram softly to himself, and they prepared a last resting-place for the now peaceful castellan, and solemnly lowered him into it with all the customary rites. The chaplain was obliged to leave immediately afterward, but at parting he again said kindly to Sintram: "Thy dear mother surely knows how gentle, calm and good thou now art!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN the castle of the Knight Biörn of the Fiery Eyes, Christmas Eve had not been kept so purely and happily, but nevertheless God's will had been clearly manifested even there.

Folko, at the request of the lord of the castle, had allowed himself to be supported by Gabrielle into the hall, and the three were sitting at the round stone table over a sumptuous repast, while at long tables on each side sat the retainers of both knights in full armor, according to Norwegian custom. The lofty apartment was almost dazzled with the light of tapers and lamps.

The deep night had already begun its solemn reign, and Gabrielle softly reminded her wounded knight to withdraw. Biörn heard the reminder and said: "You are quite right, fair lady; our knight needs rest; only let us first not neglect an old and venerable custom."

And at a sign from him four of his warriors brought in with solemn pomp a great boar, which looked as if it were made of solid gold, and placed it in the center of the stone table. Biörn's retainers rose reverentially, placing their helmets under their arms, and the lord of the castle himself did the same.

"What is meant by this?" inquired Folko, very gravely.

"What thine ancestors and mine have done on every yule-feast," replied Biörn; "we are going to make vows on Friga's boar, and then let the goblet go round."

"What our ancestors called yule-feast," said Folko, "we do not keep. We are good Christians, and we celebrate the holy Christmas-tide."

"We may do the one and not leave the other undone," answered Biörn. "My ancestors are too dear to me for me to forget their knightly customs. He who regards it otherwise may act according to his own wisdom, but that shall not hinder me. I swear by this golden boar," and he stretched out his hand to lay it solemnly upon it.

But Folko of Montfaucon called out, "Hold! in the name of our holy Saviour! Where I am and while I can still breath and will, no one shall celebrate undisturbed the rites of wild heathens."

Biörn of the Fiery Eyes looked at him fiercely. The retainers of both knights separated amid the sound of rattling armor, and arranged themselves in two bands, each behind their leader, on either side of the hall. And already here and there helmets and casques were buckled on.

"Consider what thou art doing," said Biörn. "I desired eternal and true union, ay, I was on the point of vowing

grateful fealty to the house of Montfaucon, but if thou interferest with me in the customs which have descended to me from my fathers, see to thy head and to all that is dear to thee. My anger no longer knows any bounds."

Folko signed to the pale Gabrielle to withdraw behind his retainers, and said to her: "Courage and joy, noble lady! Many weaker Christians, for God's sake and that of the holy church, have braved greater perils than those that now seem to threaten us. Believe me it is not so easy a matter to ensnare the Baron of Montfaucon."

Gabrielle drew back at Folko's order, somewhat quieted by the bold smile of her lord; but this very smile inflamed Biörn's anger still more. He again stretched out his hand toward the boar, and was on the point of uttering a terrible vow, when the baron snatched an iron gauntlet of Biörn's from the table, and with his unwounded left arm struck such a powerful blow with it at the golden image that dashed in twain it fell crashing to the ground. The lord of the castle and his followers stood around as if petrified.

Armed hands quickly seized their weapons, shields were lifted from the walls, and an angry, fiercely threatening murmur passed though the hall. At a sign from Folko one of his faithful followers reached him a battle ax, and swinging it high with his mighty left arm he stood like an avenging angel in the midst of the hall, and uttered these words through the tumult with the composure of a judge:

"What wilt thou, infatuated Norwegian? What dost thou desire, thou sinful lord; ye are indeed become heathens, and I hope to show you by my readiness for combat, that in my one uninjured arm has my God placed strength for victory. If ye can yet hear, listen to my words! Upon this same accursed boar's image, now by God's help shattered to pieces, hast thou, Biörn, laid thine hand, when thou didst swear to destroy every man from

the sea-ports who might chance to fall into thy power. And Gotthard Lenz came, and Rudlieb came, driven by the tempest to your shore. What didst thou then do, thou savage Biörn? What did ye do in compliance with him, ye, who were with him at the yule-feast? Try your utmost on me! The Lord will be with me as He was with those good men. Forward! to arms!" and he turned toward his warriors. "Let Gotthard and Rudlieb be our battle-cry!"

Biörn let his drawn sword drop, his warriors were hushed, and not an eye in the Norwegian host was raised from the ground. At length, one after another, they began softly to slip away. At last, Biörn alone stood opposite the baron and his followers. He seemed, however, scarcely to perceive his deserted condition, but sinking on his knees, he stretched out his gleaming sword, pointed to the shattered boar and said:

"Do with me as you have done with that. I have deserved nothing better. Only one thing I implore, only one; do not inflict on me the shame, great baron, of repairing to another Norwegian fortress."

"I fear you not," replied Folko, after some reflection, "and so far as it can be, I pardon you gladly." So saying he drew the sign of the cross over the wild form of Biörn of the Fiery Eyes, and allowed Gabrielle to conduct him to his apartments. The retainers of the house of Montfaucon followed him proudly and silently.

The hard spirit of the grim lord of the castle was now entirely broken, and with increased humility he awaited every look of Folko and of Gabrielle. They, however, withdrew more and more into the cheerful society of their own apartments, where even in the midst of the icy northern winter they enjoyed a spring-tide of happiness. The wounded condition of the baron did not hinder the evening amusements of tale, and lute, and song; far rather it

afforded a new and charming picture, when the handsome tall knight leaned on the arm of the delicate lady, and thus reversing their bearing and duties, they would wander together through the torch-lit halls, scattering their kindly greetings like flowers among the assembled men and women. Little or no mention was now ever made of the poor Sintram. The last wild behavior of his father had increased the terror with which Gabrielle had remembered the self-accusation of the youth, and just because Folko was so immovably silent on the matter did she all the more forbode some fearful mystery. Indeed, a secret shudder came even over the baron when he thought of the pale, black-haired youth. His repentance had almost bordered on fixed despair, and no one knew what he was doing in the ill-renowned stone fortress on the Moon Rocks. Mysterious rumors came from the fugitive retainers, of how the evil spirit had now gained complete dominion over Sintram, that no one could any longer stay with him, and that the strange, gloomy castellan had paid for his adherence to him with his life. Folko could scarcely resist the fearful suspicion that the solitary youth had become a hardened magician.

And truly, many evil spirits did flutter round the banished man, but it was without a summons from himself. It often seemed to him in his dreams as if the wicked enchantress Venus were hovering over the battlements of the fortress in a golden chariot drawn by winged cats, and calling scornfully to him: "Foolish Sintram! foolish Sintram! hadst thou but obeyed the little master! thou wouldst now be lying in Helen's arms, and the Moon Rocks would be the rocks of love, and the stone fortress would be the castle of roses. Thou wouldst have lost thy pale face and thy dark hair—for thou art only bewitched, dear youth—and thine eyes would have shone more mildly, thy cheeks more blooming than ever the world admired in

the Knight Paris. Oh! how Helen would have loved thee!" Then she would show him in a mirror how he looked as he knelt before Gabrielle, as a handsome knight, and how she, softly blushing, had fallen into his arms.

When he awoke from such visions he would seize eagerly the sword and scarf, once given him by his lady, just as some shipwrecked man grasps the planks of safety, and he would weep hot tears over them, and whisper secretly to himself: "So there was indeed one single hour in my miserable life when I was worthy and happy."

Once he started up at midnight from a similar dream, but this time with thrilling terror, for it had seemed to him as if the beautiful alluring features of the enchantress Venus had become distorted at the end of her speech by the scorn with which she glanced down upon him, and that now she looked almost like the terrible little master.

The youth could never calm his disturbed mind better than by throwing the sword and scarf of Gabrielle across his shoulders and hurrying forth under the solemn starry expanse of the wintry sky. Beneath the leafless oaks and the snow-laden firs, which grew upon the high ramparts, he would wander up and down absorbed in thought.

Once it seemed as if a melancholy groan sounded from the moat below, as if some one were at times attempting to sing, but could not from inward grief. Upon Sintram's exclaiming, "Who's there?" all was still. But when he was silent and began to walk again the fearful moanings broke forth anew as from some dying person.

Sintram overcame the horror, which seemed all-powerful to restrain him, and clambered silently down to the dry moat which was cut in the rock. He was already so deep within it that he could no longer see the stars shining; beneath him he perceived a shrouded figure moving; and with involuntary rapidity he suddenly slid down the steep descent and stood by the side of the groaning form.

The lamentations at once ceased, and a laugh like that of a maniac came from the wide fold of the female garments: "Ho ho! my comrade! Ho ho! my comrade! That was a little too quick for thee! Well, well, so it is, and see now thou standest after all no higher than I, my good valiant youth. Take it patiently, take it patiently."

"What dost thou want with me? Why dost thou laugh? Why dost thou groan?" inquired Sintram, impatiently.

"I might ask thee the same," replied the dark figure, "and thou wouldst be far less able to answer me than I am to answer thee. 'Why dost thou laugh? Why dost thou weep—poor fellow!' But I will show thee one remarkable thing in thy stone fortress of which thou as yet knowest nothing. Give heed!"

And the mantled figure scratched and scraped at the stones, and a little iron door opened, revealing a dark passage which led into profound darkness.

"Wilt thou come with me?" whispered the strange being. "It leads to thy father's castle by the shortest way. In half an hour we shall be out of it, and it opens into the sleeping apartment of thy beautiful lady. Duke Menelaus shall lie in a magic sleep; leave that to me. And then thou canst take the delicate and slender form in thine arms and bear her here to the Moon Rocks, and thou wilt win back all that seemed lost by thy former wavering."

Sintram visibly trembled, fearfully overwhelmed with passion, and yet feeling the stings of conscience. But at last, pressing scarf and sword to his heart, he exclaimed: "Oh that fairest, most glorious hour of my life! Let all other joys be lost, that bright hour I will ever hold fast!"

"A fair, bright hour!" said a scornful voice beneath the veil, like some evil echo. "Knowst thou then whom thou didst conquer? A good old friend, who only showed himself so furious, that he might at last increase thy glory in his overthrow! Wilt thou convince thyself? Wilt thou look?"

And the dark garments of the little figure flew open, and there stood before him the dwarf-like warrior in the strange armor, the golden horns on his helmet, the carved spear in his hand, the very same whom Sintram thought he had slain on Niflung's Heath, and laughing, he exclaimed: "Thou seest, my youth, in the whole wide world there is nothing but dream and froth: so hold fast the dream which delights thee, and sip the froth which refreshes thee. Now then for the subterranean passage! It leads up to thy angel Helen. Or wouldst thou like first to know thy friend still better?"

His visor opened, and the hideous face of the little master met the knight's gaze, who asked, as if half in a dream: "Art thou perhaps also that wicked enchantress, Venus?"

"The same block!" said the little master, laughing, "or rather she is from the same block as I am. Only manage that thou art disenchanted and transformed back into the beautiful Prince Paris; then, oh Prince Paris"—and his voice changed to an alluring song—"then, oh Prince Paris, I shall be fair like thee."

At the same moment the good Rolf appeared on the ramparts above, and with a consecrated taper in his lantern, he cast its light down upon the moat, seeking for the missing young knight. "For heaven's sake, Sir Sintram," he called out, "what has the specter of him whom you slew on Niflung's Heath, and whom I never could bury, to do with you?"

"Seest thou it well? Hearst thou it well?" whispered the little master, drawing back into the shadow of the subterranean passage. "The wise man up there knows me right well. Thy heroic deed was nought. Enjoy the pleasures of life while thou mayst!"

But Sintram sprang back with a mighty effort into the circle of light formed by the taper above, and cried in a

threatening voice: "Depart from me, unquiet spirit! I know I bear a name within me, in which thou canst have no part!"

Angry and alarmed, the little master ran into the passage, and closed the iron door, with a yell, behind him. It seemed as if he could be heard within groaning and roaring.

Sintram, however, climbed up the wall, and, signing to his old foster-father to be silent, he only said: "One of my best joys, yes, my very best joy has been taken from me, but, nevertheless, by God's help, I am not lost."

In the first gleams of the morrow's dawn he and Rolf walled up the door leading to the dangerous passage with huge blocks of stone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE long northern winter was at last over; the woods rustled gladly with their fresh green leaves, kindly patches of verdure peeped forth from the rocks, the valleys grew green, the brooks gushed away, only on the highest mountain-summits the snow still lingered, and Folko's bark danced, ready for sail, on the sunny waves of the sea.

The baron now wholly recovered, and strong and fresh as though his knightly strength had never been impeded by illness, was standing one morning on the shore with his beautiful wife, and glad at their approaching return home, the noble pair gazed with delight at their people who were busily engaged in packing and lading the vessel.

Presently one of the band of workers said, in the midst of a confused sound of voices, "But what appears to me the most fearful and marvelous thing in these northern lands is that stone fortress on the Moon Rocks; I have

not, indeed, been there, but if I chance on our hunting expeditions to see the battlements rising above the tops of the fir-trees, there comes at once a tightness across my breast, as though something unearthly dwelt there. And a few weeks ago, when the snow was lying thickly over the valleys, I came unexpectedly quite close upon the strange fortress. The young knight Sintram was walking alone upon the ramparts, in the growing twilight, looking like some departed spirit, and he drew from the lute he carried such soft, soft plaintive tones, and sighed so heartily and sorrowfully——”

The speaker's voice was drowned by the noise of the crowd, and, moreover, he was approaching the vessel with his well-strapped bales, so that Folko and Gabrielle could not hear the conclusion of his speech.

But the fair lady looked at her knight, with tearful eyes, and sighed: “Is it not behind those mountain peaks that the solitary Moon Rocks lie? That poor Sintram makes my heart ache!”

“I understand thee, my pure and blessed wife, and the pious sympathy that stirs thy tender breast,” replied Folko, and, immediately ordering his fleetest steed to be brought, he committed his noble lady to the care of one of his retainers, and, vaulting into his saddle, galloped away through the valley toward the stone fortress, followed by the grateful smiles of Gabrielle.

Sintram was sitting on a resting-place, in front of the draw-bridge, touching the strings of his lute, letting now and then a tear fall upon the golden instrument, just as Montfaucon's squire had described him. Something like a cloudy shadow passed over him, and he looked up thinking it was a flight of cranes through the air. But the heaven was spotless and blue, and while the young knight was still considering what it might be, a long and beautiful spear fell from the battlements and lay at his feet.

“Take it up, and use it well! Thy foe is near! The ruin of thy dearest happiness is near!” whispered a voice audibly in his ear; and it seemed to him as if he saw the shadow of the little master gliding close beside him into a cleft in the rocky moat.

But at the same moment also, a tall, gigantic, haggard figure passed through the valley, resembling in some measure the deceased pilgrim, only far, far taller, and raising his long withered arm with a threatening air he disappeared in an ancient tomb.

At the same instant, Knight Folko of Montfaucon came galloping up toward the Moon Rocks, with the swiftness of the wind; and he must also indeed have seen something of the strange apparitions, for as he halted close behind Sintram, he looked pale, and asked in a low and earnest tone:

“Who were those two, with whom you have just now been holding converse?”

“The good God knows,” replied Sintram. “I know them not.”

“If the good God does but know,” exclaimed Montfaucon. “But I fear He knows very little more of you and your deeds.”

“You speak terribly severe words,” said Sintram. “Yet since that unhappy evening—alas! and how long before it!—I must endure all that comes from you. Dear sir, you may believe me, I know not those fearful companions, I summon them not, and I know not what terrible curse binds them to my footsteps. The good God meanwhile, I trust, is mindful of me, just as a faithful shepherd forgets not the worst and wildest of his lambs, who has strayed from him, and now calls to him anxiously in the gloomy wilderness.”

The anger of the noble baron now wholly gave way. Bright tears stood in his eye as he said: “No, surely, God has not forgotten thee, only do not thou forget the good

God. I came not, moreover, to rebuke thee. I came to bless thee, in Gabrielle's name and in my own. May the Lord protect thee, may the Lord restrain thee, may the Lord lift thee up. And, Sintram, I shall bear thee in mind on the distant shores of Normandy, and shall learn how thou wrestlest with the curse that burdens thy unhappy life, and when thou shalt have some day shaken it off, and shalt stand as a noble conqueror over sin and death, then thou shalt receive from me a token of love and reward, more glorious than either thou or I can know at this moment."

The words flowed from the lips of the baron with prophetic force; he himself was only half conscious of what he was saying; then with a kindly greeting he turned his noble steed and galloped again down the valley toward the shore.

"Fool, fool, thrice a fool!" whispered the angry voice of the little master in Sintram's ear, but the old Rolf was singing his morning hymn clearly and distinctly within the castle, and the last verse was this:

"That man is blest,
Who's held in jest
By scoffers of Heaven's love;
God prints his sign,
On page divine,
And enrolls his name above."

A holy joy penetrated into Sintram's heart, and he looked around him still more gladly than in the hour when Gabrielle had given him sword and scarf and Folko had dubbed him knight.

CHAPTER XXV.

WITH a favorable spring breeze the baron and his fair wife set sail across the broad sea, and the coasts of Normandy were already rising on the watery horizon, while Biörn of the Fiery Eyes still sat gloomy and silent within his castle. He had not bid them farewell. The feeling of his soul toward Montfaucon was rather angry fear than loving reverence, especially since the affair with the boar's image, and the thought preyed bitterly on his proud heart, that the great baron, the flower and glory of the whole race, had come in joy to visit him, and was now departing with dissatisfaction and stern reproachful displeasure. Constantly present, to him, filling his breast with pangs, was the idea of how all had come to pass, and how all might have been otherwise; and he was always fancying he could hear the songs in which future generations would sing of this voyage of the great Folko, and of the worthlessness of the savage Biörn.

At length, full of fierce anger, he broke asunder the bonds of his troubled spirit, burst forth from the castle with all his retainers, and began one of the most fearful and unrighteous feuds he had ever before fought. Sintram heard the sound of his father's war-horn, and committing the stone fortress to the care of the old Rolf, he sprang forth fully armed for the combat.

But the flames of the cottages and farms in the mountains rose up before him, and with fearful characters of fire clearly portrayed to him the kind of war which his father was waging. Still he proceeded onward toward the armed hosts, but only for the sake of offering his mediation, asserting that he would not lay hand on his noble sword in such a horrible strife, even though the fury of the enemy might lay low the stone fortress and his father's castle be-

sides. Biörn hurled the spear, which he held in his hand, in mad fury against his son. The murderous weapon whizzed past him, while Sintram remained with his visor raised, not moving a limb in his defense, and said: "Father, do what you will. But I will not join in your godless war."

Biörn of the Fiery Eyes smiled scornfully. "It seems I am always to have a spy over me here; my son succeeds the dainty French knight!" Nevertheless he repented, accepted Sintram's mediation, made amends for the injuries done, and withdrew gloomily back to his ancestral castle, while Sintram returned to the Moon Rocks.

Similar occurrences were from that time not unfrequent. It went so far that Sintram was regarded as the protector of all those who were the victims of his father's bursts of fury, but nevertheless the young knight was sometimes carried away by his own wildness to join his fierce father in his furious deeds. Then Biörn would laugh with horrible delight, and would say: "See there, my son, how our torches blaze up from the farms and how the blood gushes forth from the wounds our swords have made! I plainly see, however much thou mayst assume the contrary, that thou art and ever wilt be, my true and beloved heir!"

After such wild errors, Sintram could find no other consolation than that of hastening to the chaplain at Drontheim, and confessing to him his misery and his sin. The chaplain then after due penance and contrition would absolve him from his sin, and would raise up the broken-hearted youth; still he would often say:

"Oh, how near, how very near wert thou to have overcome the last trial, and to have looked victoriously on Verena's countenance, having atoned for all! Now thou hast again thrown thyself back for years. Consider, my son, human life is fleeting, and if thou art ever falling back

anew, how wilt thou gain the summit on this side of the grave?"

Years came and went and Biörn's hair grew snowy white, and the youthful Sintram was becoming a middle-aged man; the aged Rolf could now scarcely leave the stone fortress, and sometimes he would say: "That I still live is almost a burden to me, but yet to a certain extent there is comfort in it, when I think that the good God has in store for me here below a great, great happiness. And that must concern you, dear Sir Knight Sintram, for what else in the world could rejoice me?"

But everything remained as it was, and Sintram's fearful dreams toward Christmas were every year rather more terrible than the reverse.

The holy season was now again drawing nigh, and the mind of the afflicted knight was still more troubled than ever. At times, when he had been reckoning the nights that intervened, a cold perspiration would stand on his brow, and he would say: "Take heed, my dear old foster-father, this time something fearfully decisive lies before me."

One evening he felt an overwhelming anxiety about his father. It seemed to him as if the Evil One were on his way to his father's castle, and it was in vain that Rolf reminded him that the snow lay many feet deep in the valleys; it was in vain that he suggested even that the knight might be overtaken by his fearful dreams in the mountains during the solitary night. "It could not be worse to me than remaining here," replied Sintram; and he ordered his horse from the stable, and galloped forth in the increasing darkness.

The noble steed slipped, and stumbled, and fell, in the trackless paths, but the knight always pulled him up again, and urged him only more hastily and eagerly toward the longed-for yet dreaded end. Nevertheless he

would scarcely have reached it had not the faithful hound Skovmaerk kept with him. The animal found out the snow-covered track for his beloved master, alluring him toward it by joyous barkings, and warning him by howls against the precipices and the treacherous ice under the snow. Thus at length toward midnight they reached the old castle. The windows of the hall shone brightly toward them, as though a great feast were being kept there; and a sound of singing met their ears. Sintram hastily gave his steed to some retainers in the court-yard, and ran up the steps, leaving Skovmaerk behind with the well-known horse. Within the castle, the knight was met by a faithful squire, who said: "Thank God, my dear master, that you are come. Surely once more, nothing good is going on above. But take heed to yourself, and do not suffer yourself to be deluded. Your father has a guest with him, and it seems to me a hateful one."

Sintram shuddered as he threw open the doors.

With his back toward him, there sat a little man in a miner's dress. The suits of armor had again for some time been ranged round the stone table, so that only two places were left empty; the seat opposite the door was occupied by Biörn of the Fiery Eyes, and the glaring light of the torches fell upon his face with such a crimson glow that he looked perfectly in harmony with that fearful surname.

"Father, whom have you with you?" exclaimed Sintram, and his suspicions rose to certainty as the miner turned round and the little master's hideous visage grinned from under the dark hood.

"Yes, just see, my son!" said the wild Biörn; "thou hast not been with me for a long time, and this evening this jolly comrade has paid me a visit, and thy place has been taken. But put aside one of these suits of armor, and draw a seat for thyself in its place, and drink with us, and be merry with us."

"Yes, do so, Sir Knight Sintram!" said the little master, with a laugh. "What can come of it further than that the subverted armor will rattle a little, or at the most that the wandering spirit to whom the suit belonged may look over thy shoulder. But he won't drink up our wine; spirits leave that alone. So now fall to!"

Biörn joined in the horrible laugh of the stranger with vehemence, and while Sintram was mustering up all his strength that he might not lose his senses by these wild words, and was fixing his gaze calmly and steadily on the little master's face, the old man exclaimed: "Why dost thou look at him so? Does it seem to thee perhaps as though thou wert looking at thyself in a mirror? Now that you are together, I do not see it so much, but before it seemed to me as though you were so like as to be mistaken for each other!"

"God forbid!" said Sintram, stepping nearer to the fearful apparition, and exclaiming: "I command thee, hateful stranger, to depart from this castle, in right of my power as heir, as a consecrated knight, and as a spirit."

Biörn seemed as if he were on the point of opposing this with all his fury. The little master murmured to himself: "Thou art by no means master in this house, good knight; thou hast never kindled a fire on this hearth." Then Sintram drew the sword which Gabrielle had given him, and holding the hilt before the eyes of the evil guest, he said, calmly, but in a powerful voice: "Die or fly!"

And the horrible stranger fled with such lightning speed that no one knew whether he sprang through the window or the door. But as he passed he threw down some of the armor, the tapers went out, and in the blue-yellow light which marvelously illuminated the hall it seemed as though the former words of the little master were fulfilled, and that the spirits of those to whom the steel suits

of armor had once belonged were leaning filled with awe over the table.

Both father and son felt a sense of terror, but each adopted a different way of safety. The one heard the hideous guest returning, and felt within himself that his will was so firm that the little master's step already sounded on the stone staircase, and his swarthy hand shook the fastenings of the door.

Sintram, on the other hand, kept saying to himself: "We are lost if he returns! We are lost to all eternity if he returns," and falling on his knees he prayed from the depth of his troubled heart, to Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Then the Evil One again left the door; and again Biörn called him back; and again Sintram's prayers drove him away; and thus the fearful strife of will went on through the long night, and howling whirlwinds raged around the castle till all the household thought the end of the world had come.

The dawn of day at length gleamed through the windows of the hall, the fury of the storm was hushed, Biörn sank back on his seat in powerless slumber, peace and hope came to the inmates of the castle, and Sintram, pale and exhausted, went out before the castle gate to breathe the dewy air of the mild winter's morning.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE faithful Skovmaerk had caressingly followed his master, and now while Sintram sat half-asleep on a stone seat in the wall, lay watchful and attentive at his feet. Suddenly he pricked up his ears, his bright eyes looked round with delight, and he bounded joyfully down the mountain. Immediately afterward the chaplain of Dront-

heim appeared among the rocks, the good animal clung to him, as if to greet him, and then again ran back to his master, as though to announce the wished-for visitor.

Sintram opened his eyes, like a child by whose bedside Christmas gifts had been placed. For the chaplain smiled upon him as he had never smiled before. In that smile there was a token of victory and blessing, or at least of the joyful approach of both.

"Thou hast done much yesterday, very much!" said the holy father, and his hands were folded, and his eyes were full of tears. "I praise God for thee, my noble knight. Verena knows everything, and she too praises God for thee. Yes, I venture to hope that the time is now not far distant when you can appear before her, but Sintram, Knight Sintram, there is need of haste. For the old man above needs speedy help, and a heavy trial—I hope the last—but a very heavy trial thou hast yet to endure on his account. Arm thyself, my knight; arm thyself also with bodily weapons. It is true, this time only spiritual armor is needed, but it becomes the knight as well as the monk, ever in decisive moments, to wear the solemn garb of his station. If it please thee, we will set out at once together for Drontheim. Thou must return thence this very night. This belongs also to the hidden decree which is dimly revealed to Verena. Here, moreover, there is so much that is wild and distracting, and calm preparation is to-day very necessary for thee."

With joyful humility Sintram bowed his assent, and called for his horse, and for a suit of armor. "Only," he added, "let none of the armor be brought which was last night overthrown in the hall?" His orders were immediately obeyed.

The arms which were fetched were adorned with fine engraved work; the helmet alone was simple, being formed almost more like that of a squire than of a knight, and

the lance belonging to the suit was of a gigantic size. The chaplain gazed at them all with deep thought and melancholy emotion. At length, when Sintram with the help of his squires was almost ready, the holy father spoke:

“Wonderful providence of God! See, dear sir, this armor and this spear formerly belonged to Sir Weigand the Slender, and many a mighty deed he accomplished with them. When he was tended by your mother in the castle, and when your father also was still kindly toward him, he begged as a favor that his armor and his lance might be allowed to hang in Biörn’s armory—he himself, as you well know, intended to build a cloister, to retire there as a monk—and he put his former squire’s helmet with the armor instead of another, because that was the one he was wearing when for the first time he had looked upon the angelic face of the fair Verena. How strangely has it now come to pass, that just these arms, so long unused, should have been brought to you for the decisive hour! To me, so far as my short-sighted human eye can reach, it seems a truly solemn token, but one full of high and glorious promise.”

Sintram meanwhile stood fully armed, looking solemn and stately, and from his stature and agility he might have been still almost taken for a youth, but for the careworn countenance beneath his helmet.

“Who has placed boughs on the head of my charger,” inquired Sintram, in an angry tone, “I am no conqueror and no wedding-guest; and moreover, what boughs are there but these red and yellow crackling oak leaves, sad and dead as the season itself!”

“Sir, I know not myself,” replied an esquire, “but it seemed to me as if it must be so.”

“Let it be,” said the chaplain. “I feel as if this significant token also came from the right source.”

The knight then vaulted into his saddle; the holy

father walked by his side, and both proceeded slowly and silently to Drontheim. The faithful hound followed his master.

When the lofty castle of Drontheim came in view, a soft smile spread itself over Sintram's countenance like sunshine over a wintry valley. "God is doing great things in me," said he; "I once fled from here a fearfully wild boy; I now return as a repentant man. I trust it may yet be well with my poor troubled life."

The chaplain bowed his head in kindly assent, and soon afterward the travelers passed through the echoing vaulted gateway into the castle-yard. At a sign from the holy father, some squires hastened respectfully to them and took the horse under their charge; then the chaplain and Sintram went through many winding stairs and passages to the remote little chamber which the priest had chosen for himself; far from the tumult of men and near to the clouds and stars. There they both passed a quiet day in fervent prayer, and in earnest reading of the holy scriptures.

When evening began to draw in, the chaplain arose and said: "Courage, my knight, now saddle thy horse, and mount and ride back to thy father's castle. Thou hast a laborious path before thee, and I may not accompany thee. But I can and I will call on the Lord for thee, throughout this long and fearful night. Oh! thou most precious instrument of the most High, be not lost after all!"

Shuddering with fearful forebodings, but nevertheless with a sense of strength and gladness, Sintram obeyed the holy man. The sun had just set as the knight approached a long valley strangely shut in by rocks, through which the way led to his father's castle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

At the entrance to the rocky defile the knight looked round once more, thankfully and prayerfully, to the castle of Drontheim. It stood there so vast and calm and peaceful, the windows of the chaplain's upper chamber were still lighted up with the last gleams of the sun, which had already set; before Sintram there lay the gloomy valley, gloomy as the grave.

Presently some one approached him riding on a small horse, and Skovmaerk, who had bounded instinctively toward the stranger, ran back howling and whining, with his tail between his legs and his ears thrown back, and nestled fearfully under his master's steed.

But even this noble animal seemed to forget his wonted courage. He started back, and when the knight tried to urge him toward the stranger, he reared and plunged and began to back. It was only with difficulty that Sintram's power and horsemanship at length gained the mastery; but his steed was white with foam when he approached the unknown traveler.

"You have a shy beast with you," said the latter, in a low, smothered voice.

Sintram could not rightly distinguish in the ever-increasing darkness what sort of a being he really had before him; he could only see a very pale face—he thought at first it was covered with freshly fallen snow—gazing at him from amid his long, shrouding garments. It seemed as if the stranger were carrying a small box wrapped up; his little horse as if utterly weary hung its head down, causing a bell suspended from his neck to give forth a strange sound.

After some minutes silence Sintram replied: "Noble steeds indeed avoid those of less noble race, because they

are ashamed of them, and the bravest dogs feel a secret horror at unwonted apparitions. I have no shy beasts with me."

"Good, sir knight, then ride with me into the valley."

"I am going into the valley, but I need no companion."

"Then perhaps I need one. Do you not see that I am unarmed? and at this season, at this hour, there are horribly unearthly creatures here."

Just then, as though to confirm the awful words of the stranger, a thing swung itself down from the nearest tree covered with hoar frost; it was impossible to distinguish whether it was a snake or a salamander; it curled and twisted itself, and seemed about to slide down upon the knight or his companion. Sintram thrust at it with his spear and pierced it. But with the most frightful contortions it remained fixed on the spear-head, and in vain the knight endeavored to rub it off against the rocks or branches. Then he rested his spear upon his right shoulder with the point behind, so that he might no longer have the ugly creature full in view, and turning with good courage to the stranger, he said:

"It seems indeed as if I could help you, and I am not exactly forbidden the company of an unknown stranger; so let us proceed forward into the valley."

"Help!" was the sad answer returned. "Not help; I can perhaps help thee. But God have mercy on thee if the time should come that I could no longer help thee. Then thou wouldst be lost, and I should be very terrible to thee. Let us go into the valley, and I have thy knightly word for it. Come!"

They rode forward. Sintram's horse still shy, the faithful hound still whining, but both obeying their master's will; the knight calm and steadfast.

The snow had fallen from the smooth rocks, and in the light of the rising moon many distorted shapes were to be

seen on the stony walls—some looking like snakes, some like human faces, but they were only caused by strange veins in the rocks and by the half-bare roots of the trees which had planted themselves with capricious firmness. Once more, as if in farewell, the castle of Drontheim appeared high above through a cleft in the rocks.

The knight surveyed his companion, and it almost seemed to him as if Weigand the Slender were riding beside him. "For heaven's sake," cried he, "art thou not the shade of that departed knight who suffered and died for Verena?"

"I have not suffered, I have not died; it is you poor mortals who suffer and die!" murmured the stranger. "I am not Weigand—I am that other who looked so like him and whom thou hast also met before now in the wood."

Sintram strove to free himself from the horror which came over him at these words. He looked at his horse; it appeared to him utterly altered. The dry many-colored oak-leaves on its head rose like the flames around a sacrifice in the fleeting moonlight. He looked down at his faithful Skovmaerk; fear had also strangely transformed him. Dead men's bones were lying on the ground in the middle of the road, and hideous lizards were gliding about, and in spite of the wintry season poisonous fungi were growing all around.

"Is this really my own horse on which I am riding?" said the knight softly to himself. "And is that trembling beast running by my side really my own dog?"

Just then some one called behind him in a yelling voice: "Stop! stop! Take me too with you!" On looking round Sintram saw a horrible little figure with horns, and a face partly like that of a boar, and partly like a bear, walking along on its horse-like hind legs, and a wonderful hideous weapon in its hand, formed like a hook or a sickle. It was the being who had been wont to terrify him in his

dreams, and alas! it was also the fatal little master himself, who, with a wild laugh, stretched out a long claw toward the knight.

Sintram, half-bewildered, murmured: "I must have fallen asleep! And now my dreams are coming over me!"

"Thou art awake," replied the rider of the little horse; "thou knowest me also in thy dreams—for behold, I am Death!"

And his garments fell from him, and a moldering, fleshless skeleton appeared, the half-decayed head crowned with a diadem of serpents; that which he had kept hidden under his mantle was an hour-glass almost run out. Death held out this toward the knight in his bony hand. The bell suspended to the horse's neck sounded solemnly. It was a passing bell.

"Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" prayed Sintram; and full of earnest devotion he followed Death, who signed to him to ride on.

"He has thee not yet. He has thee not yet!" screamed the horrible fiend behind them. "Give thyself rather up to me. In one moment—for my power is as swift as thy thoughts—in one moment thou shalt be in Normandy. Helen yet blooms as fairly as when she departed hence, and she shall be thine this very night."

And again he began his wicked praises of Gabrielle's beauty, and Sintram's heart beat with glowing ardor in his weak breast.

Death said nothing more, but he raised the hour-glass higher and higher in his right hand; and as the sand ran out more quickly a soft light from the glass gleamed over Sintram's countenance, and it seemed to him as though eternity in its calm glory were opening before him, and that the bewildering world were dragging him backward with its terrible power.

"I command thee, thou wild form that followest me,"

cried he; "I command thee in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ that thou ceaseest from thy seducing words, and that thou callest thyself by the name by which thou art designated in the Holy Scriptures!"

A name more fearful than a thunder-clap burst despairingly from the lips of the tempter, and he disappeared.

"He will never come again," said Death, in a kindly tone.

"Am I then indeed become wholly thine, my stern companion?"

"Not yet, my Sintram. I shall not come to thee for many, many years. But thou must not forget me the while."

"I will keep thee steadily in mind, thou fearful yet wholesome monitor, thou awful yet loving guide."

"Oh! I can also appear very gentle."

And indeed he at once showed himself so. His form became less gloomy in the increasing gleam of light that shone from the hour-glass; the features that had been so stern and awful wore a gentle smile, the crown of serpents became a bright palm-wreath, his horse melted into a white, misty cloud, and the bell gave forth sweet cradle lullabies. Sintram thought he could hear these words in the sound:

"The world and Satan are defeated,
Before thee gleams eternal light.
Warrior, whom success has greeted,
Help the old man from his sorrow,
For, ere many a coming morrow,
I shall have quenched his fiery sight."

The knight knew well that his father was meant, and he hastened on his noble steed. The horse now obeyed him readily and gladly, and the faithful hound ran again in confidence by his side; Death had disappeared, only in front there floated something like a rosy morning cloud,

which remained visible even after the sun had risen and was shining brightly and warmly in the clear winter sky.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"HE is dead! he has died from the terror of that fearful night!" said some of Biörn's retainers about this time; for since the morning of the previous day the old man had never recovered his senses, and they had prepared for him in the great hall a couch of wolf and bear-skins, in the midst of the armor that had been partly thrown down. One of the squires said with a low sigh: "Oh God! have mercy on this poor wild soul!"

Just then the watchman on the tower blew his horn, and a trooper entered the chamber with an air of surprise.

"There is a knight approaching," said he, "a wonderful knight. I could have taken him for my Lord Sintram, but a bright, bright morning cloud is always floating close before him, and so illuminates him with its glory that one could imagine that red flowers were being showered down upon him. His horse, too, has a wreath of crimson boughs about its head, such as has never been the wont of our dead master's son."

"Just such a one," replied another, "did I weave for him yesterday. It did not please him at first, but afterward he suffered it to remain."

"And why didst thou do it?"

"It seemed as if some one were forever singing in my ear:

" ' Victory! Victory!
The noblest victory!
The knight rides forth to victory!"

"And then I saw a branch of our oldest oak-tree stretched out toward me, and in spite of the snow it had

retained all its gold and crimson leaves. So I did according to that which I had heard sung, and I plucked some of the leaves and wove a wreath of victory for the noble war-horse. At the same time, too, Skovmaerk—you know the good beast had always a marvelous fear of the Knight Biörn, and had for that reason gone to the stable with the horse—Skovmaerk sprang upon me, caressingly and pleased, as though he would thank me for my work, and such noble animals well understand good prognostics.”

The sounds of Sintram’s spurs were heard approaching on the stone steps; followed by the joyous bark of Skovmaerk.

At the same moment the supposed corpse of the old Biörn sat up, and, looking round with rolling, staring eyes, he asked his terrified retainers in a hollow voice:

“Who comes there, ye people? Who comes there? I know it is my son. But who comes with him? the answer bears the sword of decision with it. For see, my good people, Gotthard and Rudlieb have prayed fervently for me; but if the little master comes I am lost in spite of them!”

“Thou art not lost, dear father!” sounded Sintram’s kindly voice through the gently-opened door, and the bright morning cloud floated in with him.

Biörn folded his hands, and looking gratefully to heaven, he said with a smile: “Yes, yes, thank God, it is the right companion! It is bright kindly death!”

Then he signed to his son to approach, saying: “Come here, my deliverer! Come, thou blessed of the Lord, that I may tell thee all that has passed with me.”

As Sintram now sat close by his father’s couch, all who were in the room perceived a remarkable and striking change. The old Biörn, whose whole countenance as well as his eyes was wont to be so fiery, was now quite pale, almost like white marble; while on the other hand the

formerly pale Sintram glowed with the rosy brightness of youth. This was caused by the morning cloud which still shone upon him, the presence of which in the room was indeed rather felt than seen, but still a gentle shudder passed through every heart.

"See, my son," began the old man in a soft and mild tone. "I have lain for a long time in a death-like slumber, and I have not been conscious of anything going on around me; but within, ah! within, I have been conscious of too much! I thought my soul would have perished with eternal anguish, and yet again I felt with still greater horror that my soul was as eternal as the anguish I endured. Dear child, thy cheeks that glowed so brightly are beginning to grow pale at my words. I must refrain. But let me tell you something more beautiful. Far, far away, I saw a bright, lofty church, and in it Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz were kneeling and praying for me. Gotthard had now grown very very old, and he almost looked like our snow-clad mountains, but in those bright hours when the evening sun is shining on them. And Rudlieb was also an elderly man, but still very vigorous and strong; and with all their vigor and strength they were both praying for me, and supplicated help from God for me their enemy. Then I heard a voice, like that of an angel saying: 'His son is doing his utmost for him. He must wrestle in this night with Death and with the Fallen One. His victory will be victory, and his defeat will be defeat for the old man and for himself!' Upon this I awoke, and I knew now that all depended upon the one whom thou shouldst bring with thee. Thou has conquered. Next to God the praise be to thee!"

"Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz have also helped much," replied Sintram; "and my dear father, the fervent prayers also of the chaplain at Drontheim. I felt when wrestling with temptation and terror, how the heavenly breath of holy men was floating round me and helping me."

"I readily believe thee, my noble son, and all that thou sayest," replied the old man, and at the same moment the chaplain entered; and Biörn, with a smile of peace and joy, held out his hand toward him.

It was a beautiful circle of unity and blessedness. "See," said the old Biörn, "how even the good Skovmaerk springs kindly up to me now, and tries to caress me! It is not long since he always howled with fear when he saw me."

"My dear lord," replied the chaplain, "there is a spirit dwelling in good beasts, though indeed in a dreamy and unconscious state."

By degrees it grew stiller and stiller in the hall. The last hour of the old knight was approaching, but he continued calm and happy. The chaplain and Sintram prayed by the side of his couch. The retainers knelt devoutly around. At length the dying man said: "Is that the matin bell in Verena's cloister?" Sintram nodded an assent, but his hot tears fell on his father's pallid face. Then a gleam lightened up the old man's eyes, the morning cloud stood close over him, and the gleam and the morning cloud and the life departed from the corpse.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FEW days afterward Sintram was standing in the parlor of the convent, waiting with beating heart for his mother to appear. The last time he had seen her, he had been awakened—a slumbering child—to receive her warm farewell-kiss, and then had fallen asleep again, half conjecturing in his dreams what his mother had wanted with him, and seeking her in vain the following morning in the castle and garden. The chaplain was now at his side, full of joy at the chastened rapture of the gentle knight, on whose cheeks a faint reflection of that solemn morning cloud yet lingered.

The inner doors opened. In her white veil, tall and stately, the Lady Verena entered with a heavenly smile, and signed to her son to approach the grating. There could be no thought here of any passionate outburst of grief or of delight. The holy peace which dwelt in these halls would have found its way to a heart even less tried and purified than that which beat in Sintram's breast. Silently weeping, the son knelt down before the mother, kissed her flowing garments through the grating, and felt as though he were in paradise, where every desire and every disturbing care is hushed.

"Dear mother," said he, "let me become a holy man, as thou art a holy woman. Then I will go to the monastery yonder, and perhaps I may one day be deemed worthy of being thy confessor, if illness or the weakness of age should confine the good chaplain to the castle of Drontheim."

"That would be a sweet and quietly happy existence, my good child," replied the Lady Verena. "But that is not thy vocation. A brave mighty knight thou must remain, and the long life—for the most part always granted to us, the children of the North—thou must spend in succoring the weak, in restraining the lawless, and in yet another bright and honorable employment, which I up to this time rather honor than know."

"God's will be done!" said the knight, rising full of devotion and firmness.

"That is my good son," replied the Lady Verena. "Ah, how many fair calm joys sprang up for us! See, our long yearnings for reunion have been satisfied, and thou shalt never more be so wholly sundered from me! Every week on this day thou must return to me, and tell me what glorious deeds thou hast achieved, and take back with thee my counsel and my blessing."

"Then I shall once more be like a good happy child!"

exclaimed Sintram, joyfully; "only that the good God has endowed me besides with manly power in mind and body. Oh, what a blessed being is a son to whom it is granted to gladden his beloved mother with the fruits and spoils of his life!"

Thus he quitted the cloister's quiet shade, glad and rich in blessing, and entered upon his noble course. Not satisfied with going about wherever there was right to uphold and wrong to avert, his now hospitable castle stood open as a place of protection and refreshment to every stranger; and the old Rolf, now almost grown young again at the sight of his knight's excellence, was installed as seneschal. The bright and beneficent winter of Sintram's life passed on, and only at times would he sigh in secret within himself and say: "Ah, Montfaucon! ah, Gabrielle! if only I could hope that you have indeed wholly forgiven me!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE spring had already come in its brightness to the northern lands, when one morning—after a successful and well-contested battle with the most formidable disturber of the peace of the district—Sintram was riding back to his ancestral castle. His troopers rode after him, singing as they went. As they approached nearer, the glad notes of a horn sounded from the castle. "Some welcome visitor must have arrived," said the knight, and he spurred his horse to a quicker pace over the dewy meadow.

While they were still far off they saw the old Rolf busy in preparing a table for the morning meal under the trees in front of the gateway. From all the towers and battlements banners and flags were floating gladly in the fresh morning breeze, and the squires were running to and fro in festive attire. As soon as the good Rolf perceived his

master, he clapped his hands joyously over his gray head, and hastened into the castle. The wide gates were soon thrown open, and Sintram as he entered was met by Rolf with tears of joy in his eyes, as he pointed to three noble forms that were following him.

Two men of lofty stature—the one very aged, the other already gray-headed, and both unusually alike—were leading between them a beautiful youth dressed in a page's attire of azure velvet richly embroidered with gold. The two old men wore the black velvet dress of German burghers, with massive gold chains and large shining medals round their neck and breast.

Sintram had never before seen his noble guests, and yet they seemed to him like long and intimate acquaintances. The old man then reminded him of his dying father's words about the snowy mountains illuminated with the evening sun, and then he remembered—he himself knew not how—that he had once heard Foiko say that in the southern lands one of the highest peaks of that sort was called the mountain of St. Gotthard. And at the same time he knew also that the strong vigorous man on the other side of Gotthard must be Rudlieb. But the youth between the knights—ah! Sintram in his humility scarcely ventured to hope who he might be, however much his proud though delicate features recalled before his mind two highly-honored images!

Then the aged Gotthard Lenz, the king of old men, advanced toward Sintram with a solemn air, and said:

“This is the noble boy, Engeltram of Montfaucon, the only son of the great baron of Montfaucon; and his father and mother send him to thee, Sir Sintram, well knowing thy glorious and pious knightly career, that thou mayest bring him up in all the honor and power of this northern land, and mayest make him a Christian knight like thyself.”

Sintram sprang from his horse. Engeltram of Mont-

faucou held the stirrup gracefully for him, courteously checking the retainers who pressed forward, with these words: "I am the noblest born squire of this noble knight, and the service nearest his person belongs to me."

Sintram knelt down on the turf in silent prayer, then raising the youthful image of Folko and Gabrielle in his arms toward the morning sun, he exclaimed: "With God's help, my Engeltram, thou wilt be like that sun, and thy course will be like his!"

Then Rolf cried out, weeping with joy: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace!" Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz were pressed to Sintram's heart; and the chaplain of Drontheim, who arrived just then from Verena's cloister to bring a joyful morning greeting from her to her brave son, spread his hands in benediction over them all.

It is possible that some day the writer may be permitted to recount the glorious deeds achieved by Engeltram of Montfaucon under Sintram's guidance, and subsequently alone—deeds both in the service of God and for the honor of women.

POSTSCRIPT.

OFTENTIMES the question arises whether a poet has taken the creations of his mind from previous works, or in what way they have suggested themselves to him. Such a question seems to me in no way devoid of interest; and I think when the author is able himself to elucidate the matter, he is induced—and to a certain extent pledged—to impart the fact to the reader. Hence the following statement:

Some years ago there lay among my birthday presents a beautiful engraving from a painting by Albrecht Dürer; it represented a knight in full armor, of elderly appearance, riding on a noble steed, accompanied by his dog, through a fearful valley, where the clefts in the rock and the roots of trees seemed distorted into the most horrible forms, and poisonous fungi grew all around.

Noxious reptiles were crawling about among them. By his side, on a lean horse, rode Death; and behind, a demon-form stretched forth his clawed arm toward him; horse and dog looked strange, as though infected by the horrors round them; the knight, however, rode calmly on his way, bearing on his lance's point an already impaled salamander. Far in the distance might be seen the noble friendly battlements of a castle, causing the seclusion of the valley to be more heavily oppressive. My friend, Edward Hitzig, the donor of the engraving, had added a note requesting me to interpret these enigmatical figures for him in a romance. The task was not then allowed me, nor for long after; but I carried the picture constantly in my mind, through peace and war, until it has now distinctly spun and fashioned itself out before me; but instead of a romance it has become a little tale, if the kind reader will accept it as such.

3d December, 1814.

Fouqué.

THE END.

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